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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

Designers' favourites

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Pretty in pink

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The joy of plants

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editor's letter

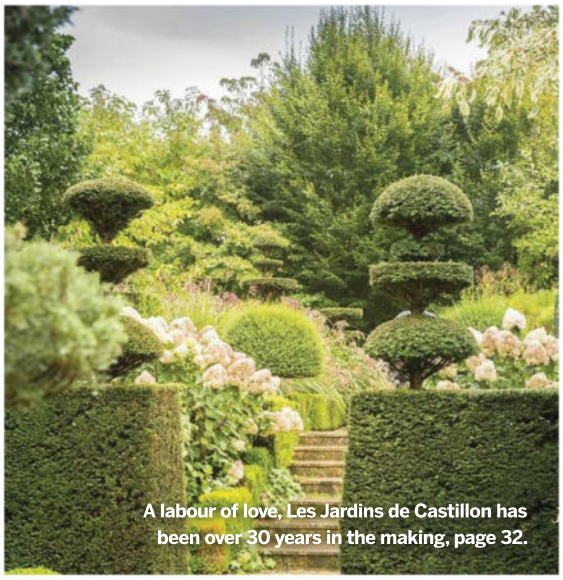
Most likely, bulb catalogues will have arrived through your letter box – or by email – by now. I love the yearly ritual of going through them and whittling down my list. I find bulbs quite irresistible as they are a relatively fail-safe way to inject colour and interest into the garden come spring. My enthusiasm is tempered only by the realisation that I will actually have to put them all into the ground (and, I hasten to add, the expense – especially given my latest enthusiasm for historic tulips). Being inquisitive by nature, I couldn't resist asking a group of professional designers what they would be putting into their shopping baskets this year. Turn to page 40 to find who's planting what. Inspired by the feature, Avon Bulbs has kindly put together a collection for which it is offering readers 20 per cent discount (see page 108 for details). Creating a garden that provides interest throughout the year can be challenging even for professional designers, so it's great to see what garden owners Colette and Hubert Sainte Beuve have achieved at Les Jardins de Castillon in northern France. Inspired by the English gardening tradition, they began the garden in 1984 and have created a horticultural feast, cleverly using green architecture to divide it into numerous rooms. Now in their eighties, the couple are evidently still full of enthusiasm; Hubert says of his wife: "For her, gardening 'work' does not exist, only pleasure. And passion." Having reflected on this, I think I'll order those extra bulbs after all and just get on and plant them. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet

GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED

Save money when you **subscribe to the digital edition** – see page 30

We take a sneak peek at what spring bulbs the design professionals will be planting this autumn, page 40



A labour of love, Les Jardins de Castillon has been over 30 years in the making, page 32.

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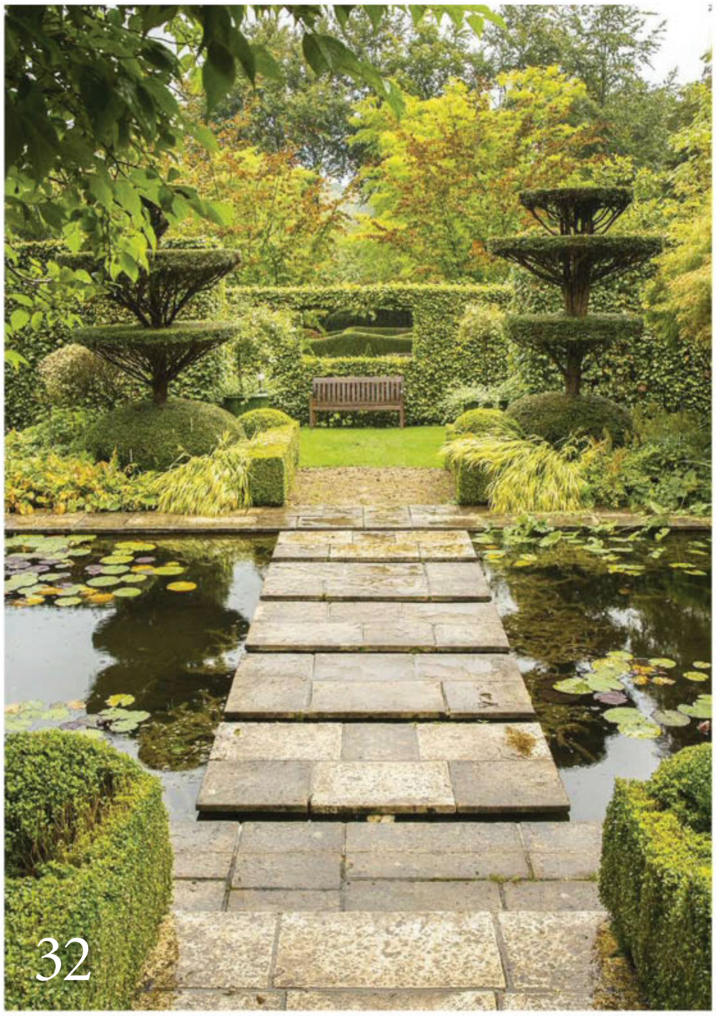
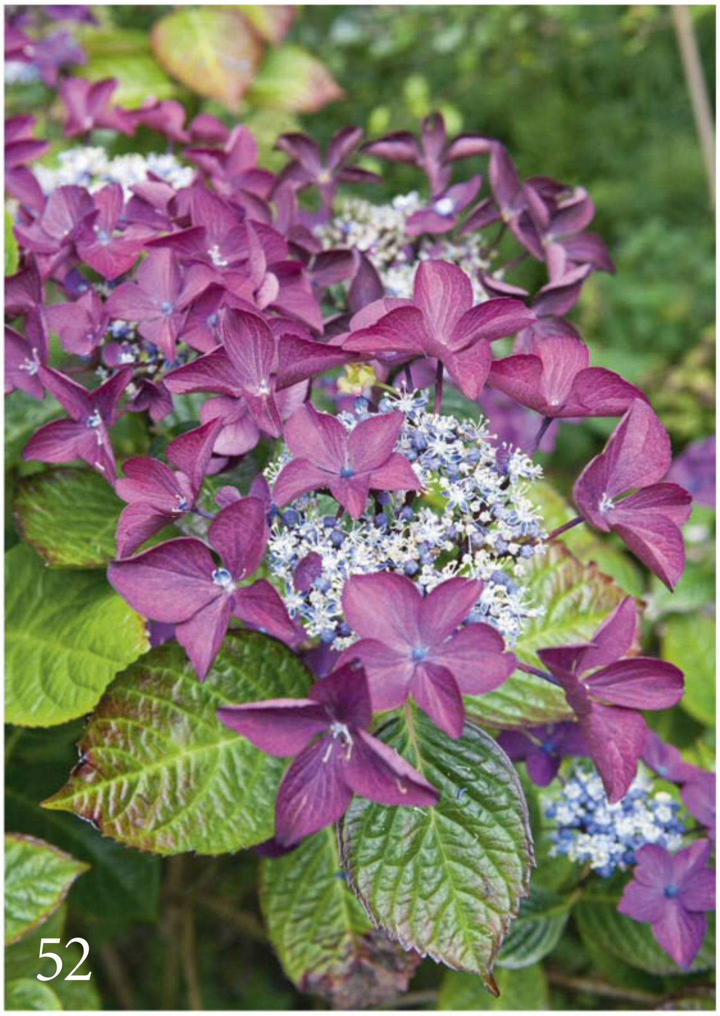
BJORN HANSSON / GAP PHOTOS, SIBYLLE PETREK

contents OCTOBER 2016





ON THE COVER

The joy of plants page 32
Spring bulbs page 40
Family garden page 48
Nerines page 70

COVER IMAGE
Les Jardins de Castillon
Photograph by
Sibylle Pietrek

Plants

20 **Plantsman's favourites** Marina Christopher recommends ten of her favourite garden plants for October, including two chrysanthemums – one discovered by the late Christopher Lloyd

40 **Jewels in the ground** We asked five leading garden designers, including Jinny Blom and Declan Buckley, to recommend their favourite spring bulbs to guarantee some colour after the dull winter months. What tulips, alliums, narcissi and crocuses will they be planting?

52 **Plant profile: hydrangeas** Renowned for their remarkable flower heads, which come in a range of pretty colours, these versatile garden staples are now very much on-trend and as simple as ever to grow, says Andy McIndoe

70 **Pearly queens** The plants that flower when few others do – bright pink nerines and amarines take the spotlight come autumn

Places

32 **Savoir flair** Hubert and Colette Sainte Beuve's garden may be in northern France but its roots are firmly planted in the great English tradition

48 **Optical illusion** At first glance, this stylish north London garden looks like a rectangular plot but that's all down to designer Sara Jane Rothwell's clever play with planting and landscaping

62 **Shock of the new** The garden of Dutch designer Jikke Hamerpagt was created with a modernist house at its centre, but don't expect stark and sparse as it is full of colour, texture and lush planting

People

60 **Who's who** Christine Skelmersdale, owner of Broadleigh Bulbs, on the need for organisation and how the RHS has left her speechless, twice

SIBYLLE PIETREK, ANDREA JONES

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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED
see page 30

SIETSKE DE VRIES, PERNILLA BERGDAHL / GAP PHOTOS

76 **The human touch** We visit the Dorset studio and garden of artist Hugh Dunford Wood, where he finds inspiration for his handmade wallpapers, with their plant motifs and natural designs

114 **The frost report** Frank feels like he's playing weather roulette with his English garden

Design

81 **Design update** Including a sculpture exhibition, a new parkland in Manhattan, Tom Stuart-Smith's new garden for the Hepworth Wakefield Gallery and hedging trials at RHS Wisley

86 **Design ideas** Soothing as well as conversation worthy, formal water channels known as rills are a stylish addition to any garden, says designer James Alexander-Sinclair

91 **Design sourcebook** It's time to prepare your firewood for the upcoming winter. We pick our favourite axes that will make splitting logs a joy

Regulars

3 **Editor's letter**

6 **Contributors**

11 **Dig in** This month: news of the Chantilly flower show and two fabulous exhibitions

17 **Get kitted out** for cleaning and tidying

25 **Gardener cook** Allotmenteer Jojo Tulloh overcomes a flash flood and turns her attention to the comfort food of French country cooking

29 **Gardening talent** Meet Alixandra Chalk, head gardener at Westonbirt School, Gloucestershire

30 **Subscription offer** Save money when you take out a subscription to the digital edition

93 **Books** Our pick of the latest books, including Noël Kingsbury's *New Small Garden*

97 **Crossword and how to buy back issues**

105 **Shop** Find your ideal product at the *Gardens Illustrated* online shop

113 **Next issue** What's coming up in November

EVENTS AND OFFERS

- Announcing the ***Gardens Illustrated* Festival**, 25-26 March 2017 – page 9
- *Save money when you **subscribe to the digital edition** – see page 30
- **Save **20% on selected spring bulbs** from Avon Bulbs – page 108

* Saving available to UK residents paying by direct debit only.

** Offer open to readers in the UK and Europe only.

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The course is led by **Andrew Fisher Tomlin, designer and Chartered Horticulturist**, and we are fortunate to have **some incredible specialist lecturers** including Rosy Hardy, Neil Lucas of Knoll Gardens, Tony Kirkham from the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** and Nigel Dunnett from the **University of Sheffield**. Designer tutors include James Basson, Jo Thompson, Paul Hervey-Brookes, Anne-Marie Powell, Carolyn Willets and Amanda Patton.

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ALISON JENKINS

Planting designer Alison trained at the English Gardening School. She often collaborates with other designers, architects and head gardeners and loves using plants across a range of different sites. She shares some of her favourite spring bulbs with us on page 42.

"Spring bulbs are an essential element of a dynamic planting scheme, providing a much-needed lift after the dark days of winter."

SIBYLLE PIETREK

German photographer Sibylle specialises in garden and floral photography and regularly publishes flower calendars and stories about gardens across Europe. She visited Les Jardins de Castillon near Bayeux while in France. Her pictures are on page 32.

"I was amazed by Colette and Hubert Sainte Beuve's topiary and the way their garden seemed to gleam after heavy rainfall."

KIRSTIE YOUNG

LIA LEENDERTZ

Lia is a garden writer who has a weekly column in *The Telegraph*. She has written several gardening books and recently wrote her first cookery book, *Petal, Leaf, Seed*. See her feature on a small London garden by designer Sara Jane Rothwell on page 48.

"Sara Jane worked so hard to tie the garden in with the strong design features of the house – she has created a satisfying effect."

SIETSKE DE VRIES

Sietske is a Dutch garden and landscape photographer, who loves the structures and the plant and colour combinations in gardens, especially when early morning fog creates a feeling of paradise. On page 62 she visits the surprising garden of Jikke Hamerpagt in the Netherlands.

"Jikke's garden is lovely, a great combination of lush borders in a garden structured with strong lines. Beautiful in every season."

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Gardens Illustrated is available for licensing and syndication.

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THIS MAGAZINE IS OWNED AND PUBLISHED BY IMMEDIATE MEDIA COMPANY BRISTOL

Standard subscription rates: UK £58.50 per annum; Eire and Europe £54.10 for 13 issues; rest of the world £64.95 for 13 issues. Distribution Frontline, Peterborough. US distribution Source IPD/Speedimpex. Email intlquery@seymour.co.uk Printed in the UK by William Gibbons Ltd. *Gardens Illustrated* (ISSN 0968-8920) (USPS 015-608) is published 13 times a year (monthly with a Special issue in December) by Immediate Media Company Bristol, 2nd Floor, Tower House, Fairfax St, Bristol BS1 3BN, UK. Distributed in the US by Circulation Specialists, LLC, 2 Corporate Drive, Ste. 945, Shelton, CT 06484. Periodical postage paid at Shelton, CT and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Gardens Illustrated*, PO Box 37495, Boone, IA 50037-0495. Unsolicited manuscripts, artwork or transparencies are accepted on the understanding that the publishers incur no liability for their storage or return. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and may not be reproduced without permission. The *Gardens Illustrated* cover is printed on 250gsm Respecta Gloss produced in Belgium by Burgo; the china clay filler is supplied from the UK. The Immediate Media Company Limited is working to ensure that all of its paper is sourced from well-managed forests. This magazine can be recycled for use in newspapers and packaging. Please remove any gifts, samples or wrapping and dispose of it at your local collection point. All prices are correct at time of going to press.

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Drawing together an exciting programme of speakers, the two days will be packed with fascinating horticultural discussions and discoveries, plus tours of Westonbirt and other Cotswold gardens.

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Join us and get your gardening season off to a great start.

Speakers for 2017 include: James Alexander-Sinclair, Jinny Blom, Val Bourne, Helen Dillon, Marina Christopher, Annie Guilfoyle, Andy Hamilton, Mary Keen, Noël Kingsbury, Roy Lancaster, Arne Maynard, Ann-Marie Powell, Sarah Raven, Charlie Ryrie, Cleve West

To find details of all events go to

gardensfestival.com

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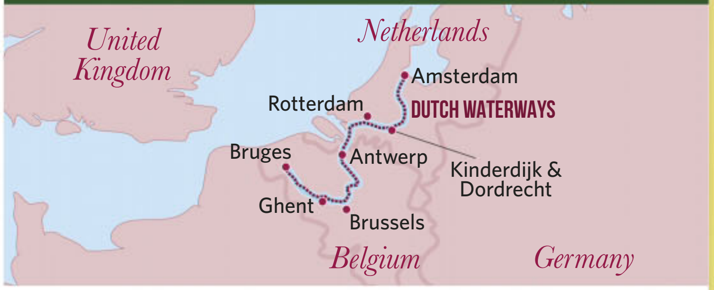

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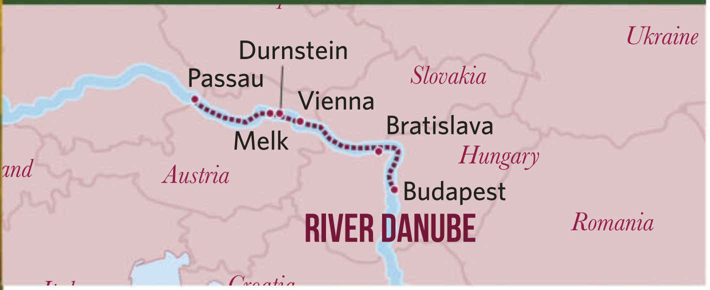

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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY **ALYS HURN**

JEAN-PIERRE DELAGARDE

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C'est magnifique

For more than 30 years, the best European nurseries have joined together for France's biggest flower show, Les Journées des Plantes in France. For the Autumn Show (14-16 October) exhibitors will gather once again at its new setting, the stunning parkland of Domaine de Chantilly near Paris, to showcase high-quality plants and floral displays. The weekend will also include demonstrations and specialist talks, suited to both amateur and professional gardeners, plus expert gardening advice. Tickets cost €17. **domainedechantilly.com**

Andrew Crace

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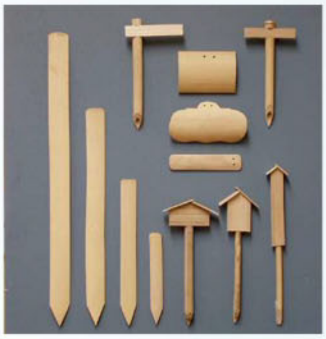

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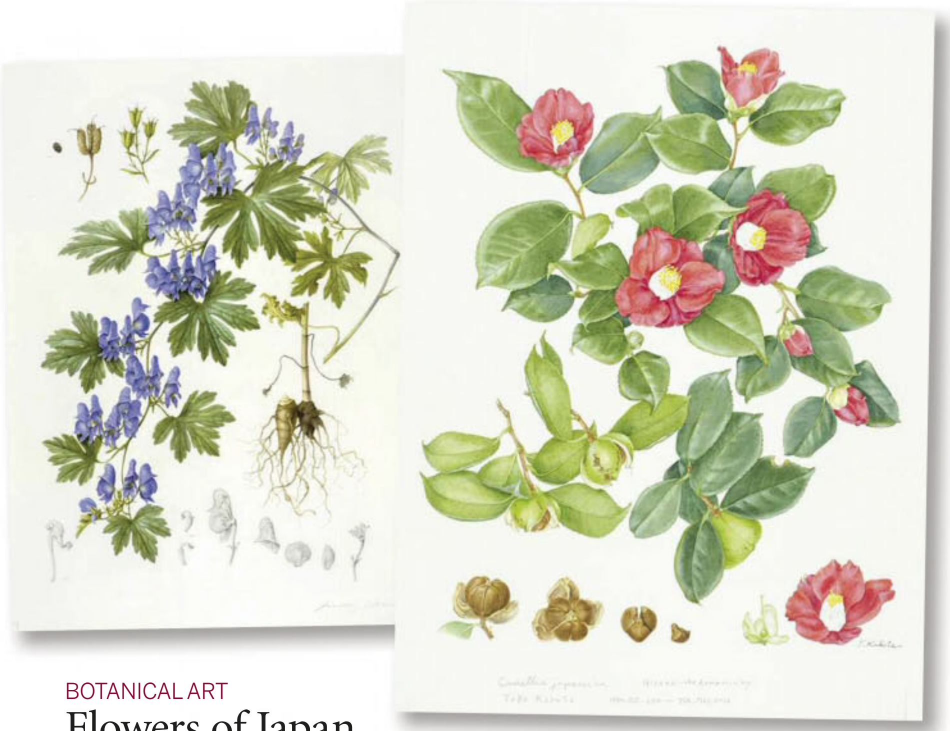

BOTANICAL ART

Flowers of Japan

The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is celebrating the beauty of Japanese native flora in an exhibition, *Flora Japonica*, which runs until 5 March 2017. On display will be works by some of Japan's best contemporary botanical artists, who capture the natural beauty of plants, such as camellias and the Japanese maple, plus pieces that have never been seen outside Japan, including historic drawings and paintings. Kew's very own Japanese collections, as well as further works from the Shirley Sherwood archive, will add to the exhibition to create a comprehensive insight into Japan's unique plant life. **kew.org**

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

Preserving a legacy

During the half century he gardened at Great Dixter, Christopher Lloyd recorded the evolution of the garden on colour slides for his books, articles and lectures. Now you can see his pictures for the first time in a historic exhibition, *Christopher Lloyd's Garden 1954-2006,* which marks the tenth anniversary of his death. The exhibition is on display in the Great Barn and starts with the 1950s, when 'Christo' returned from college to earn a living from his own garden, and continues to the 1990s when he gardened with his friend and head gardener Fergus Garrett, transforming the rose garden into an exotic jungle. It runs until 30 October and is a wonderful opportunity to see how Great Dixter developed under his care. Admission included in entry price to the garden. **greatdixter.co.uk**

NEW TOOLS

The long and short of it

These new stainless steel tools have been developed by Dutch toolmakers Sneeboer to make easy work of gardening in terrariums. With a handle length of 60cm, the Terrarium Spade and Terrarium Fork will make preparing and maintaining miniature gardens more manageable, allowing for more elegant designs. The tools are part of Sneeboer's indoor collection and cost €35.40 each. **sneeboer.com**

NEW EDITION

The latest edition of the RHS A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants *is out now. The updated version of this comprehensive reference guide from the Royal Horticultural Society includes over 5,000 new plant entries, plus all the latest research and gardening expertise from more than 70 horticultural experts. £75. dk.com*

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POTS FOR SPRING BULBS

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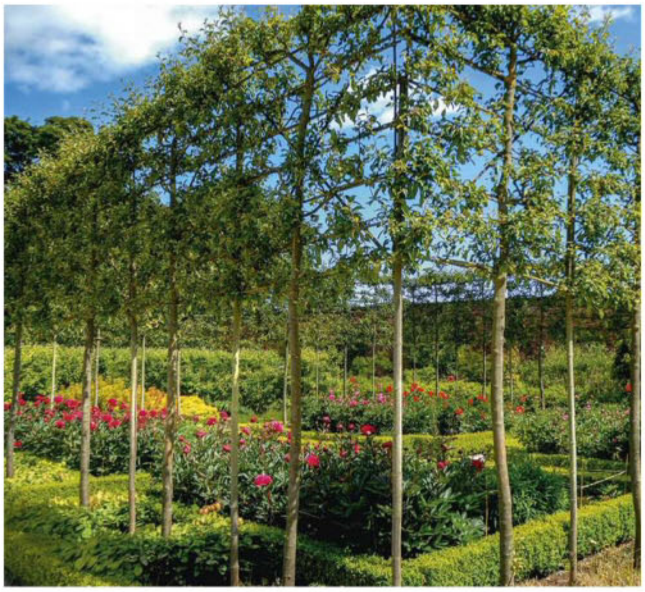
If you're after frost-resistant pots for your spring bulbs, try the terracotta collection by Hortus Loci. Each pot is hand-thrown by world-class Turkish potters, who use traditional skills to create classic designs. New for 2016 is the Cylinder Pot, which is deep enough for daffodils or tulips. Prices start at £35. Tel 0118 932 6495, **hortusloci.co.uk**



PLEACHED TREES

A popular alternative to hedging

Pleached crab-apple trees are a great way to create an attractive screen or to add structure to a garden, and we've seen an increase in their use of late. Creating a clear stem topped by a framework of branches requires skill and patience, but happily there are plenty of nurseries that supply ready-trained trees and now is the time to plant them. Branch Nurseries, near Lincoln, grows and pleaches trees (Tel 01636 822154, branchnurseries.co.uk). Other suppliers include Majestic Trees (Tel 01582 843881, majestictrees.co.uk), Barcham Trees (Tel 01353 720950, barcham.co.uk), Brogdale (Tel 01795 531 888, brogdaleonline.co.uk) and Hedges Direct (Tel 01257 263873, hedgesdirect.co.uk).

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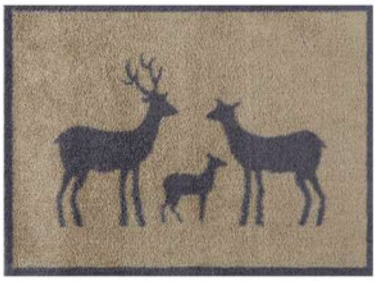

Diary

The Great Hall at Lambeth Palace

- **Apple Affair**

A weekend of folk music, cookery demonstrations and a chance to take a tour round the orchards at West Dean Gardens. 1-2 October, 10.30am-5pm. £12.50. West Dean Gardens, near Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0RX. Tel 01243 818210, westdean.org.uk

- **Exploring Eden at Lambeth Palace**

A symposium exploring how the Garden of Eden has inspired the design and making of gardens, with guest speakers including Tom Stuart-Smith and Christopher Woodward. 5 October, 10am-4pm. £60. Great Hall, Lambeth Palace, London SE1 7JU. Tel 020 7401 8865, gardenmuseum.org.uk

- **Apple Tasting**

This free event is an opportunity to taste old and new apple and pear varieties grown on the Blackmoor Estate – with entertainment and cider too. 9 October, 10am-4.30pm. Blackmoor Estate, Blackmoor, Liss, Hampshire GU33 6BS. Tel 01420 476003, blackmoorestate.co.uk

- **Compost Clinic**

Learn how to improve the quality of your soil and the benefits of compost heap creatures. 14 October, 10am-1pm. £30. Chelsea Physic Garden, 66 Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HS. Tel 020 7352 5646, chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

- **Beginner's Floristry Course**

A short starter course to broaden your knowledge of floral art and caring for cut flowers in the home, plus how to make your own hand-tied bouquet. 22 October. £125. Daylesford Farmshop & Café, Daylesford, near Kingham, Gloucestershire GL56 0YG. Tel 01608 731700, daylesford.com

- **Halloween Decorations**

Move beyond the boundaries of the carved pumpkin and learn to make simple decorations to dress your home for Halloween. Lunch included. 26 October, 10am-4pm. £52.20. Allomorphic, 11 Lansdown, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 1BB. allomorphic.co.uk

- **RHS London Shades of Autumn Show**

Celebrate the beauty of autumn colour and find advice on how to extend the gardening season. 28-29 October, 10am-6pm. £6. RHS Lindley Hall and RHS Lawrence Hall, London. Tel 020 3176 5800, rhs.org.uk

PLEACHED TREES IMAGE, PETER ATKINSON / ALAMY

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*RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2015. Gold medal - Serena Fremantle - Artisan Garden, Gold medal - Marcus Barnett - Main Avenue Show Garden, Silver Gilt - Tanya Shinkarenko - Fresh Garden, Silver Gilt - Kamelia Bin Zaal - Main Avenue Show Garden.

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for cleaning and tidying this autumn

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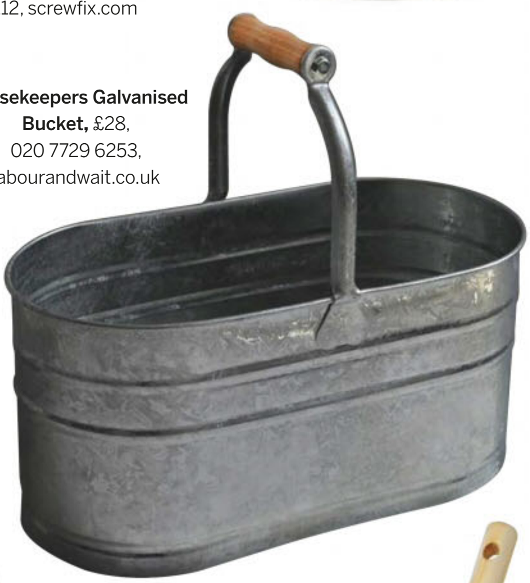
Titan TTB670PRW 100BAR Pressure Washer, £49.99, 0333 011 2112, screwfix.com

Gauntlet Gloves, £16.50, 01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



Housekeepers Galvanised Bucket, £28, 020 7729 6253, labourandwait.co.uk

Bulldog Premier West Country Shovel, £31.12, 0800 783 2202, qualitygardentools.com

Love 'Em and Leave 'Em, five sacks, £9.95, 0345 605 2505, worm.co.uk

Compact Miracle Block Paving Brush, £9.95, 0114 233 8262, burgonandball.com

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Felco Folding Pruning Saw, £31.95, 0333 400 1500, harrodhorticultural.com

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Get kitted out

for cleaning and tidying this autumn

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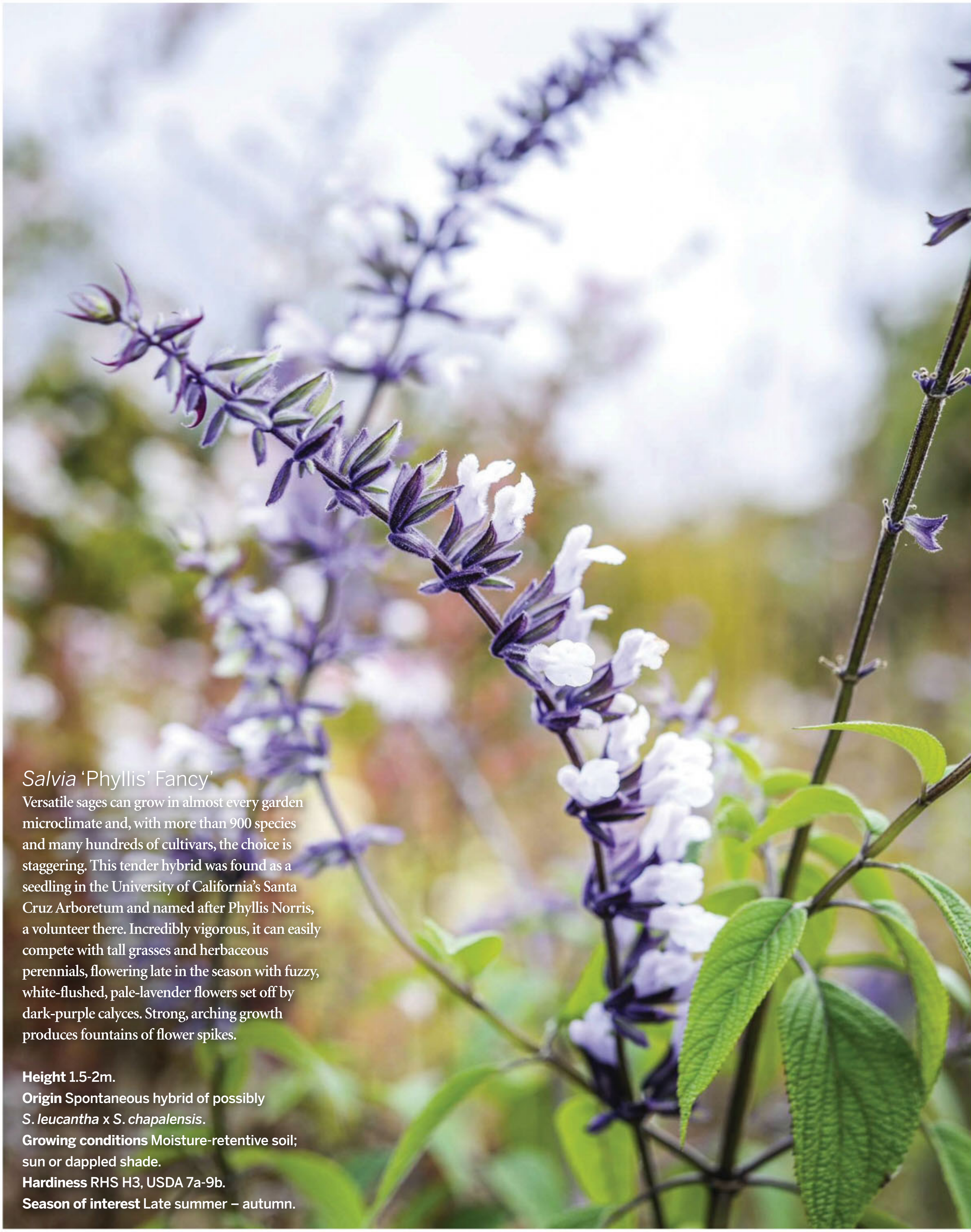


Salvia ‘Phyllis’ Fancy’

Versatile sages can grow in almost every garden microclimate and, with more than 900 species and many hundreds of cultivars, the choice is staggering. This tender hybrid was found as a seedling in the University of California’s Santa Cruz Arboretum and named after Phyllis Norris, a volunteer there. Incredibly vigorous, it can easily compete with tall grasses and herbaceous perennials, flowering late in the season with fuzzy, white-flushed, pale-lavender flowers set off by dark-purple calyces. Strong, arching growth produces fountains of flower spikes.

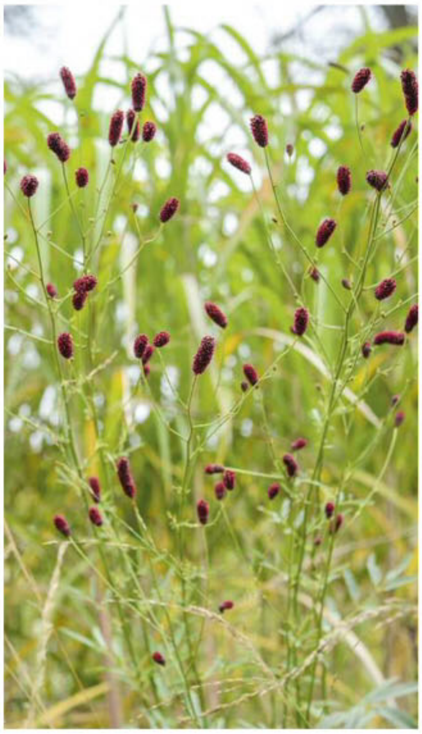
Height 1.5-2m.
Origin Spontaneous hybrid of possibly *S. leucantha* x *S. chapalensis*.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 7a-9b.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.

Marina Christopher is a plantswoman who owns Phoenix Perennial Plants in Hampshire*.

October plants

Summer may be at an end but Marina finds there is still plenty of colour among familiar favourites to brighten up our autumnal borders

WORDS MARINA CHRISTOPHER PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



Sanguisorba 'Cangshan Cranberry'

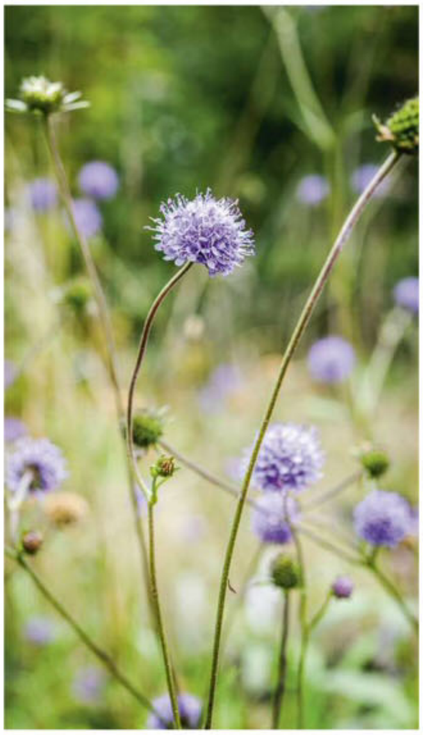
Burnets are invaluable in naturalistic plantings giving small shots of colour among ornamental grasses and other tall herbaceous perennials. It is possible to have a *Sanguisorba* in flower from April through to November using the different collections and hybrids available. 'Cangshan Cranberry' is the last to flower in October and November. It was collected by plantsman Dan Hinkley in 1996, in the alpine meadows of the Cangshan Mountains in China, and has proved an exceptional garden plant.

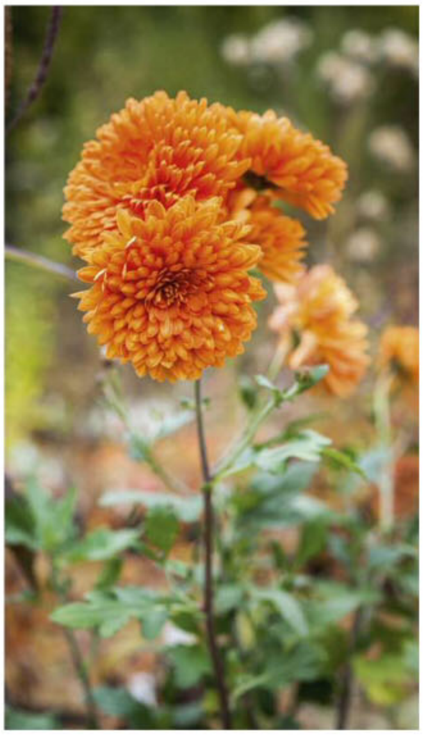
Height 1.8m.
Origin Yunnan province, China.
Growing conditions Moisture- retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.

Succisa pratensis

The devil's bit scabious has to be one of my favourite late-summer plants. It has long, wiry stems topped with rounded, bluish-purple flowers, which are caviar to bees and butterflies alike. A garden photographer once complained that she was unable to take a photograph of a flower head without an insect landing on it. It is a British native and grows almost anywhere, in sun or dappled shade, in acid or alkaline soils and will tolerate moist or fairly dry sites. Wonderful with tall ornamental grasses, such as *Panicum*, adding small dots of colour.

Height 60cm-1.2m.
Origin Europe, western Asia.
Growing conditions Most soils; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.





Chrysanthemum 'Dixter Orange'

This seedling was discovered and nurtured by Christopher Lloyd at Great Dixter. It is an early flowering, double chrysanthemum providing superb autumnal hues in a mixed herbaceous border or as a specimen for a container. As it is double, the flowers are of little use to insects, providing neither pollen nor nectar but its colour and presence are enough to make it a cheerful addition to my miscellany of late-summer plants. It works particularly well with Michaelmas daisies and shorter grasses.

Height 90cm.
Origin Seedling found at Great Dixter.
Growing conditions Good soil, not too dry or too wet.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.

*OPEN BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. EMAIL MARINA@PHOENIXPERENNIALPLANTS.CO.UK FOR DETAILS. †HOLDS AN AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

Chrysanthemum 'Ruby Mound'

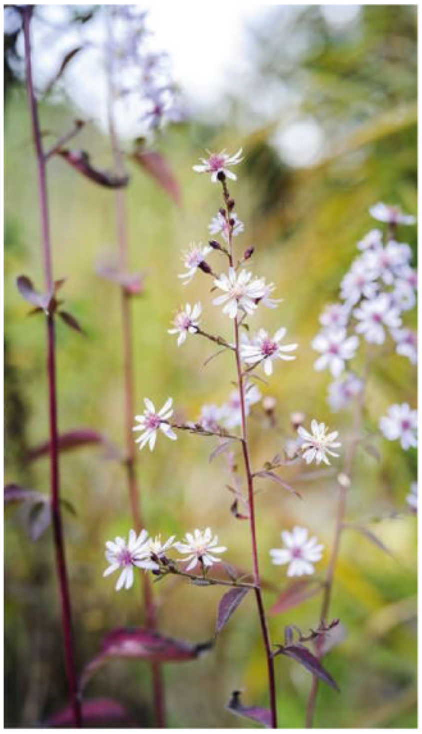
This autumn-flowering, double chrysanthemum is the sumptuous colour of a rich burgundy. It's not very hardy, but it's worth the trouble of digging it up and keeping it in a container in a relatively frost-free environment over winter. Alternatively, take some cuttings in late summer or early autumn as an insurance policy against winter loss. Useless for insects, with neither nectar nor pollen, but a superb colour. AGM†.

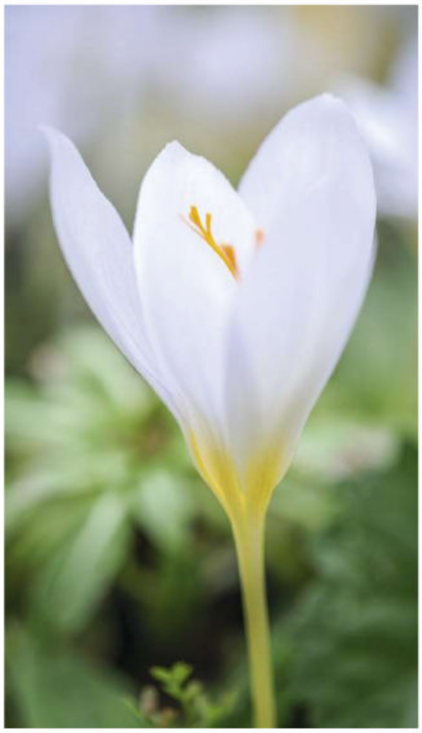
Height 60cm.
Origin Raised by Edgar and Ruth Lehman of Faribault, Minnesota in the 1950s.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H3.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.

Symphyotrichum cordifolium 'Chieftain'

Late summer and early autumn is when the *Asteraceae* or daisy family rise into their ascendancy. This aster, recently reclassified as *Symphyotrichum*, flowers late in the season on slender, dark-red stems with spires of small, lavender-blue daisies in such abundance they appear as a hazy cloud. New flowers open with a yellow disc that changes to reddish-purple on pollination, a pleasing contrast to the lavender ray petals. The heart-shaped foliage is mildew resistant. AGM.

Height 1.8-2m.
Origin North America.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.





Crocus 'Zephyr'

As the nights draw in and the weather deteriorates, autumn bulbs begin to emerge through the newly moistened earth. It always amazes me that the rounded delicate flowers of autumn crocuses can withstand the adverse conditions. This one was raised by the Dutch nurseryman Thomas Hoog and is a hybrid between *C. speciosus* and *C. pulchellus* with the larger size of the former and the white anthers of the latter, and has almost translucent pale-blue petals with a tracery of darker veins and a deep-yellow throat. AGM.

Height 10-15cm.
Origin Southeast Europe.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Early autumn.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best

At this time of year, many ornamental grasses are reaching their zenith for colour as well as flower plumes and spikelets. You'll find a fine selection in the Millennium Garden at **Pensthorpe Natural Park** and, thanks to this year's wet growing season, *Miscanthus* cultivars should feature deeper reds and purples than in a dry season where buffs and browns are more prominent. *Pennisetum* and *Panicum* species and cultivars also feature purples, red, buff, russets, gold and yellow as dominant hues. The flowering stems of *Molinia* turn a glorious butter yellow, lighting up a border backlit by a low seasonal sun. Fakenham Road, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 0LN. Tel 01328 851465, pensthorpe.com

Michaelmas daisies provide much-needed pollen

Pensthorpe Natural Park

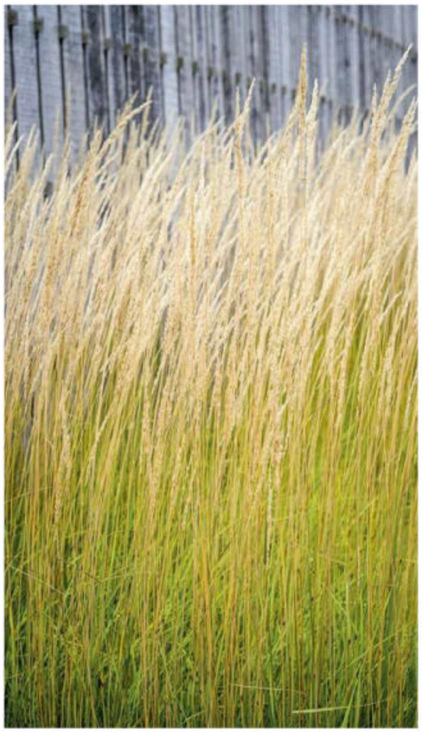
Cally Gardens, Scotland

HOLMES GARDEN PHOTOS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Calamagrostis x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'

This ornamental grass, named after the famous German nurseryman, has one of the longest seasons of interest of any plant used in gardens. Cut down to ground level in late February, it will produce vigorous arching clumps of foliage within a month and by midsummer has a strong vertical accent with dark-purple flower plumes. These fade to silvery buff in autumn and are retained throughout the winter months. It can be used as an effective screen.

Height 1.5-1.8m.
Origin Naturally occurring hybrid between *C. epigejos* x *C. arundinacea*.
Growing conditions Most soils but not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Spring – winter.



Serratula tinctoria var. *seoanei*

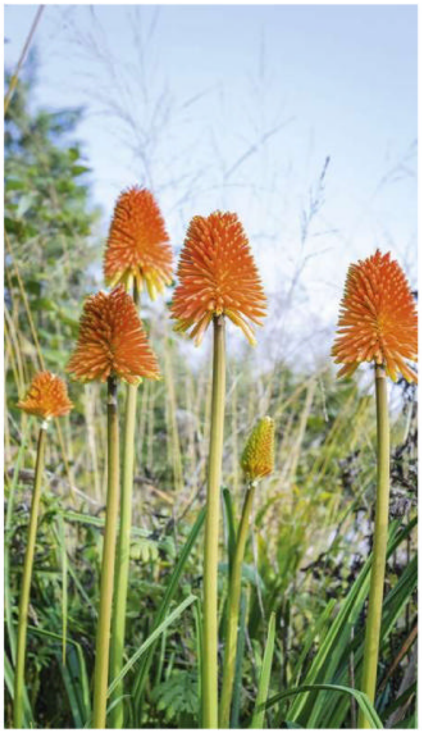
This diminutive thistle relative flowers in September and October, providing pollinators with much-needed nectar at a time of the year when food sources are dwindling. It has deeply divided, dark-green, pinnate foliage with leaves that are almost glossy in texture forming a neat mound throughout the growing season. Twiggy flowering shoots emerge in late summer with tightly closed, scaly flower buds opening to tiny, pinkish-mauve thistle heads. A good subject for a rock garden or the front of a border given a sunny aspect and good drainage.

Height 15cm.
Origin Southwest Europe.
Growing conditions Well-drained soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 7b-10a.
Season of interest Summer – autumn.

Kniphofia rooperi

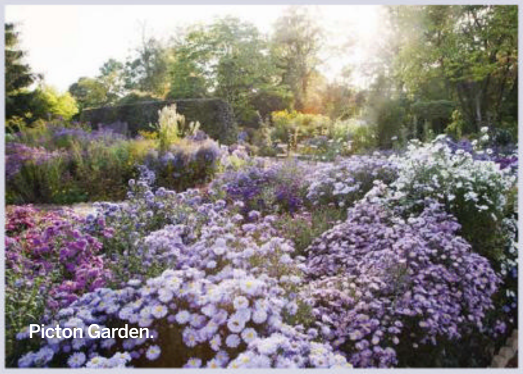
This eye-catching poker is one of the last to flower in British gardens. Stout flower stems with conical buds suddenly appear in autumn growing several centimetres daily as the inflorescence develops. The egg-shaped flower heads are tightly packed with orange, tubular flowers that open from the base to the top, fading to yellow as they mature. Beloved by long-tongued bees and any other pollinators small enough to squeeze into the slender tubes. In its native South Africa it's pollinated by sunbirds and butterflies. AGM.

Height 1-1.5m.
Origin South Africa (coastal eastern Cape).
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.
Season of interest Autumn.



and nectar for insects to stock up on so they can overwinter successfully. The colour range is mainly pink, blue and purple; the tones most favoured by their bee pollinators but there are a few white, yellow and reddish species and cultivars as well. To see a great collection of these invaluable autumn flowers visit the **Picton Garden** where Paul and Meriel Picton hold one of the Plant Heritage collections of *Aster* and related genera. The Picton Garden, Old Court Nurseries, Colwall, Malvern, Worcestershire WR13 6QE. Tel 01684 540416, autumnasters.co.uk

Burnets feature through much of the year but are especially effective with late-season grasses adding spots of colour among the russet, brown and buff tones. There are two Plant Heritage collections at their best during August and September: **Berrybank** near Edinburgh and **Avondale** on the outskirts of Coventry. Berrybank Nursery, 5 Boggs Holdings, Pencaitland, East Lothian EH34 5BA. Tel 01875 341179, macplants.co.uk; Avondale Nursery, at Russell's Nursery, Mill Hill, Baginton, Warwickshire CV8 3AG. Tel 07979 093096, avondalenursery.co.uk


Picton Garden.

ABIGAIL REX / GAP PHOTOS

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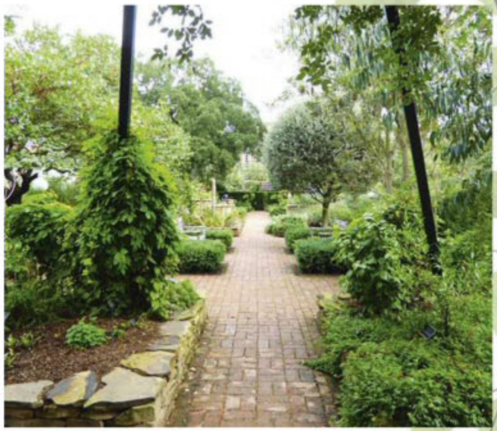

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IN THE GARDEN

After a flash flood on her plot, Jojo considers the importance of soil health and keeping an eye on rotation

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

In June a month's rain fell in one night. Tucked up in bed, I quite enjoyed the sound of the raindrops steadily drumming. It was not so cheering when, a day or so later, I visited the allotments and found there had been a flash flood. The culvert that runs down one side had become blocked, and dirty, black water had risen up and poured out over the lower lying plots, including mine. The floodwater had drained away but the evidence of it was everywhere – planks had come loose from raised beds and floated across from other plots, in the shed tools bloomed orange with rust, the mud was caked (erasing my recent efforts) and all plants were coated in a thick layer of black grime. And so followed a couple of weeks of hard work. By breaking up the soil, mulching around plants (corn, courgettes, beans and tomatoes), propping up the collapsed potato haulms and painstakingly sponging the silt off leaves, I was able to save most of my crops and they were soon thriving again. It could have been much worse. One of the reasons my plot bounced back so quickly is because the soil was in good health. After 15 years of digging in manure and compost and sowing green manures, the soil has developed a complex structure. Instead of washing away the topsoil, the floodwater soaked down into the sponge-like ground – an effect created by growing long-rooted plants, such as chicory, that help break up the soil deep beneath the surface, and the increased microbial biomass (bacteria and fungi) in the soil.

Another key way gardeners increase the health and fertility of their soil, control weeds and reduce the risk of pests and disease is by rotation – growing plants in different parts of the garden each year. You can divide vegetables into the following rotation groups: brassica (cabbages, mustards); legumes (peas and beans); solanaceae (potatoes, peppers, tomatoes); alliums (leeks, onions, garlic); and umbelliferae (carrots, parsley, celeriac). Organic farmers use slower rotations (typically eight years) but in the vegetable garden where we work the ground harder by taking much more food out of a smaller space, typically a three- or four-year rotation is used with added compost and manure to enrich the soil. Obviously, rotation is much harder in a small garden and I don't always get it right but I try to leave the longest interval between potatoes or the cabbage family to reduce the risk of eelworm or clubroot disease. I also sow long-rooted crops, such as carrots, parsnips and comfrey, which work like the farmers' herbal leys (grasses planted with deep-rooting herbs), to reach down deep and bring up minerals, plus I have lots of small beds for intercropping and I ensure I have something to plant or sow after crops are cleared. Do this and your soil should be in good health. ▷

WHAT TO DO NOW

Now is a good time to plant wintering onions for harvest in late spring. These should be planted as sets (small bulbs). I like the look and sound of the early cultivar 'White Snowball', £2.30 for 100 sets from Tucker Seeds, which has round, very white bulbs with a sweet flavour that might make good pickles (edwintucker.com). Also tempting is an old favourite, the Japanese 'Senshyu', which is a golden-brown colour with a semi-flat shape, available for cropping from May and widely available, or the attractive, white-bulbed and green-stemmed, mild-flavoured 'Radar', £5.35 for 130 sets from Organic Gardening Catalogue (organiccatalogue.com). You should also think about ordering garlic for planting next month. If you want to cover ground over winter then there is still time to sow a green manure. Winter tares or field beans can go in now. They will germinate in colder weather and their long roots are good for breaking up heavy soils as well as fixing nitrogen. One packet, £2.30 from Tucker Seeds (edwintucker.com), should cover 12 square metres, sown 20cm apart in rows 10cm apart. Cut them down in spring and leave them to rot before digging in, or let the worms drag the organic matter into the soil and aerate.

IN THE KITCHEN

There is something effortless about composing a menu from ingredients you have grown yourself. Everything seems to sing harmoniously on the plate; the flavours of each season naturally complement each other in a way that it could take a lifetime to learn. This late-autumn menu is a graceful way of achieving culinary success that reaches its apotheosis in French country cooking and, in particular, the tradition of cooking from the potager, a garden that delights both the eye and the stomach. It's an idea I find central to a life well lived. For this sorrel soup, you will need four tablespoons of butter, two thinly sliced shallots, a finely chopped stick of celery, two medium-sized potatoes (peeled and diced), and a large bunch of sorrel (400g), the larger leaves (with stalks removed) sliced into ribbons known as chiffonade, plus a few chives to garnish. Melt half the butter in a medium-sized pan and sweat the shallots until translucent. Add the celery, potato and sorrel and stir regularly until the sorrel has broken down into a grey-green purée before pouring on a litre of boiling water. Bring to a simmer and cook with lid ajar until the potatoes break up when pressed against the side of the pot with a spoon. Stir in the remaining butter, taste and season. Serve alongside some sourdough toast rubbed with garlic and olive oil. Follow this with a dish of borlotti beans combined with red peppers for which you'll need 1kg of borlotti beans (try beans harvested this season or older dried beans soaked overnight), two red peppers, one red onion (finely chopped), one each of a white onion, carrot and stick of celery, three cloves of garlic, a sprig of sage and rosemary, bay leaf, fresh basil, oil and vinegar. Char the peppers over a gas flame (or roast in the oven) place in a bowl, cover and leave to soften then scrape off the skin and remove seeds and stem, cut into strips and marinade with two tablespoons of olive oil, a tablespoon of red wine vinegar, the red onion and a little salt. Meanwhile, shell the borlotti beans and place in a pot, cover with water, bring to the boil (skimming off any foam) then add the carrot (peeled), onion and celery, garlic and a bouquet garni of the sage, rosemary and bay. Cook for 15 minutes then add three tablespoons of olive oil and cook for a further 15 minutes until beans are tender (longer for dried beans). Drain the beans and toss with three tablespoons of olive oil and a handful of chopped basil. Add the red pepper and shallot mixture and serve with a colourful gratin (see below) and finish with a fruit soufflé (also below) for a taste of French country life without leaving home.

USEFUL COOKERY TIP

No. 10 *Perfect vegetable soup*

Stock is not always necessary for a vegetable soup and they can taste purer without it. Use a peeled and diced potato for body in a pumpkin or beetroot soup.

RECIPES

Potato and tomato gratin

2 sweet onions, **500g potatoes**, **2tbsp olive oil**, **4 large ripe tomatoes**, **1tbsp thyme**, **75g parmesan**, **150ml chicken stock**. Core and slice tomatoes into 0.5cm slices and place to one side. Peel and slice your potatoes into thin coins, rinse off starch, toss the slices in a clean tea towel and then twist up into a bundle. Sweat the onions gently in the olive oil until transparent; add the chopped thyme leaves. Butter a gratin dish and spread the onions across the bottom. Layer the potatoes then tomatoes, seasoning as you go, and top with grated parmesan – then repeat. End with a layer of potato and pour over the stock then sprinkle on one more layer of cheese. Cover with foil and cook for 1 hour (180°C, Gas 4). After 45 min, remove the foil and press down with a spatula. Brown and serve.

Damson soufflé

300g damsons, **4tbsp sugar**, **2 egg yolks**, **2tbsp cream**, **5 egg whites**, **icing sugar**. Preheat oven to 190°C, Gas 5. Place a flat baking tray in the oven, butter a soufflé dish. Stone the damsons and simmer in a little water until soft then push through a sieve. Add the sugar, the egg yolks (well beaten) and cream. Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Add a spoonful of egg white to the mixture to loosen it, and swiftly fold in the remaining egg whites with a spatula. Gently turn into the soufflé dish, dust with icing sugar and cook for 25 min until well risen.

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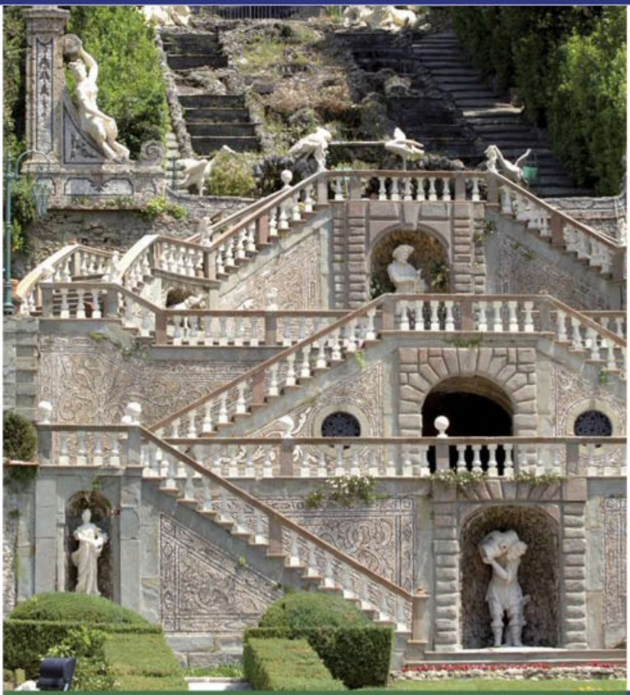

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Alixandra Chalk

While wildflowers may be her first love, head gardener Alixandra is enjoying experimenting with more unusual, tender plants in the historic Italianate Garden at Westonbirt School

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest garden memory The scents of the flowers in the small garden where I grew up – philadelphus, honeysuckle, a huge velvety peony and a hedge of rugosa roses. I also loved learning the common names of wildflowers and I was fascinated by Culpeper's *Herbal Remedies* and making potions as a child.

What inspired you to become a gardener? I did do a short stint as a legal secretary before becoming a gardener. I used to nod off in the afternoons and at that point I realised I had a physical need to be outside with my hands in the soil and being around plants.

Influential gardens At the moment I have a particular love of the exotic border in Westonbirt School's Italianate Garden where I can pretend I live somewhere a little bit warmer than Gloucestershire and experiment with some more unusual, tender plants.

Favourite planting style The winner for me is when unusual plant combinations work together – this is sometimes more of a happy accident than planned – and also when planting schemes look 'natural' (easier said than done!).

Biggest challenge facing gardeners today? The cost of training – I was very lucky to be able to do my OCN (Open College Network) Horticulture and RHS qualifications for a relatively small amount of money but government funding cuts have made it much harder for many people to train and enter the profession. This is a real shame as it's so important to have a stream of fresh minds (and bodies) entering the world of horticulture.

What heartens you about our attitude to gardening today? The number of people who are willing to give their time as volunteers in this country's wonderful legacy of historic gardens – without their time and energy we would be struggling to maintain these places.

Favourite gardening books I love *Paradise and Plenty* by Mary Keen about the Rothschild's private house Eythrope in Buckinghamshire – there are many useful day-to-day tips among the sumptuous photos of what must be gardening to perfection. ☐

Contact alixandrachalk@live.co.uk

Westonbirt School in Gloucestershire, where Alixandra is head gardener, is the location for the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, 25-26 March 2017. See page 9 or visit gardensfestival.com for details.

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This garden may be in northern France but its roots are firmly planted in the great English tradition
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GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED

Savoir flair

This garden may be in northern France but its roots are firmly planted in the great English tradition

WORDS **CAMILLA SWIFT** PHOTOGRAPHS **SIBYLLE PIETREK**

I’m very, very sad,” says Hubert Sainte Beuve. It is the day after the EU referendum and Hubert comes from a family of fervent Anglophiles. Raised by an English nanny, Hubert watched with joy, aged 15, the D-Day troops emerging from the Normandy beaches. The inspiration behind the nursery and garden at Castillon in Normandy, which he created with his wife Colette, was their enduring love for that most English body of plants, the hardy perennial, and by countless visits made to the great English gardens, Sissinghurst, Hidcote, Great Dixter, Tintinhull. The sense of irony is almost overwhelming.

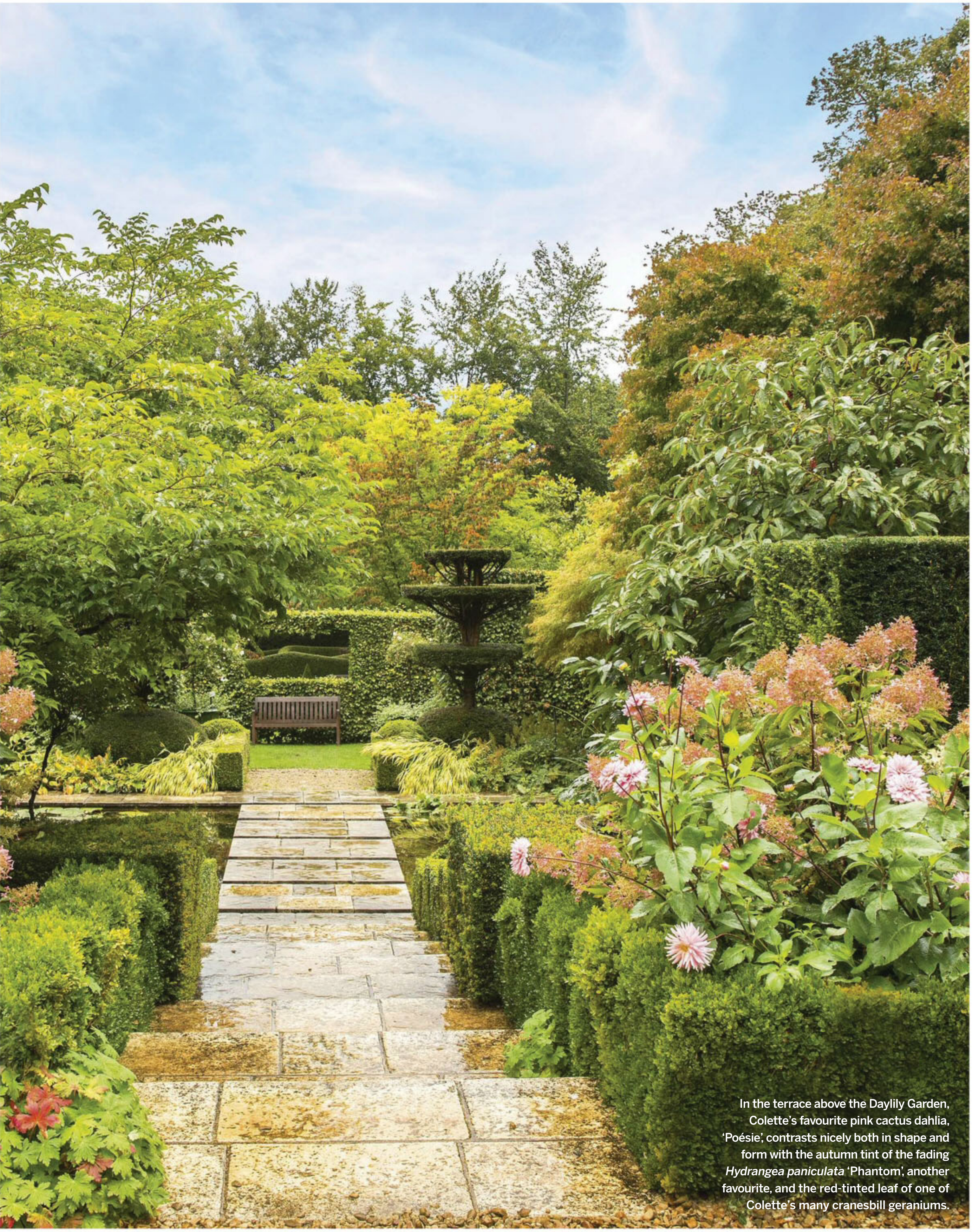
How best to describe Les Jardins de Castillon? Imagine discovering an unobtrusive restaurant tucked away down a winding, narrow lane in this intensely rural part of France, the Normandy bocage, then sitting down to a feast of epicurean heaven, an unabated succession of course after sublimely delicious course. Les Jardins de Castillon are the horticultural equivalent of this gastronomic delight.

This *Alice in Wonderland* garden, apparently huge but actually surprisingly small, starts at the top of a gentle slope. A generous broad walk, lined with opulent shrubs, banks of old roses, and some remarkable trees (a handkerchief tree *Davidia involucrata*, a cloud-pruned *Parrotia persica* and a mighty quince), provides the backbone that runs between two contrasting gardens. On one side are laid out the principal courses in this horticultural feast; a sequence of eight garden rooms wrapped around by tall yew hedges, with exuberant mixed borders, lush humidity-loving and aquatic plants, scented herbs and Far Eastern sculpted conifers. Rooms lead one to the next, each unique in style, planting and pace. On the other side, in classic French style, a succession of formal terraces punctuated by phantasmagorical topiary ends in a small arboretum with a miniature maze. The expertise and variety of Colette’s planting – she was one of the first exhibitors at France’s premier flower show, Courson [now Chantilly] – promises that, wherever you are, whatever the season, there is never a dull moment in this garden with its remarkable fusion of restrained design and ebullient planting.

Turn over for our Q&A with Hubert and Colette ▷

In brief

Name Les Jardins de Castillon.
What A horticultural feast, featuring restrained design and ebullient planting from a passionate plantswoman.
Where Near Bayeux, Normandy, France.
Size Two acres.
Climate High rainfall, cold winters and warm summers.
Soil Rich but acid farmyard soil.
Hardiness rating USDA 9.



In the terrace above the Daylily Garden, Colette's favourite pink cactus dahlia, 'Poésie', contrasts nicely both in shape and form with the autumn tint of the fading *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Phantom', another favourite, and the red-tinted leaf of one of Colette's many cranesbill geraniums.

Colette and Hubert.

Who or what has most inspired you in creating the garden?

Colette I was born in a town, so I'd never gardened before I moved with my husband to his farm. Then in 1974 he bought a nursery (he had always loved plants). We lost many plants in the winter of 1975, and even more in the terrible heat of the following summer.

Hubert So Colette rolled up her sleeves to help.

C I wanted to work. I caught my husband's passion for hardy perennials, they were almost unknown here then. The French were more interested in parks and bedding plants. So we went to England and came back with all these unknown perennials to propagate and sell in the nursery.

How did the gardens themselves come about?

C Our customers had no idea how to use these tiny plants in small pots so we decided to make a garden to exhibit our perennials, to showcase garden design with plant displays. To provide a feast for the eyes, with a wealth of gardening knowledge. We were greatly inspired by everything English – by gardeners Penelope Hobhouse and Beth Chatto, by nursery experts Elizabeth Strangman and Graham Gough, and by the great gardens themselves. We stole the idea for our hedges from Hidcote, our medieval garden from Sissinghurst, and we were bowled over by the plant choice in English nurseries such as Blooms of Bressingham.

We began in 1984 with the original garden of rooms, which we designed ourselves. Ten years later we met the Parisian engraver François Houtin, who designed the terraces and the topiary. We copied the topiary shapes he sketched for us on black and white ▷

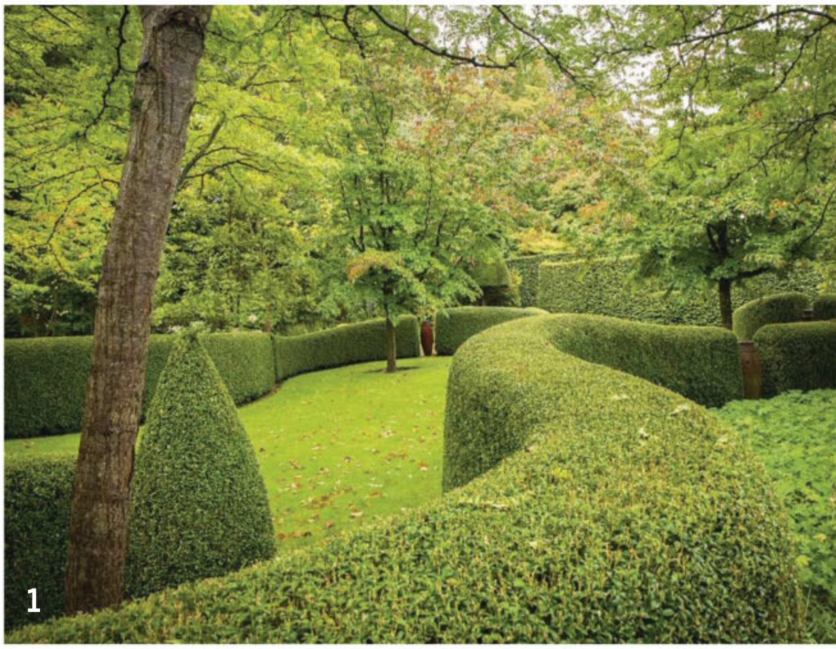
Design features to steal

Diverse and interesting shapes, such as this sinuous box hedge that snakes through the arboretum (**1**) to the maze. Elsewhere in the garden, plants mirror topiary, hedges are cut away to mimic curves of trees dying back in winter and intriguing shapes are trimmed in September, always following the originals drawn by the engraver François Houtin.

Wherever you look, enticing views lead out of each of the terraces and garden rooms. Some are long, giving a clever sense of false perspective such as here in L'Allée des Fleurs (**2**); others tease – a tantalising half glimpse round a corner or through a frame in a hedge (**3**), always leading you on.

Changing the mood and style. Colette chose garden rooms to show her ever-expanding planting palette to maximum effect. Each is a small theatre with a different play and cast, from the simple arboretum (**1** and **3**) to the almost wanton jungle planting of the Water Garden to the quiet contemplation in the Sissinghurst-inspired medieval Aromatic Garden.

Symmetry with spontaneity. The strict geometric lines of yew, box and beech hedging with swathes of bold planting are punctuated and lifted by impressionist, sometimes fantastical, shapes, spheres and cones of topiary as here (**4**) where the Blue Garden and Ornamental Grasses meet.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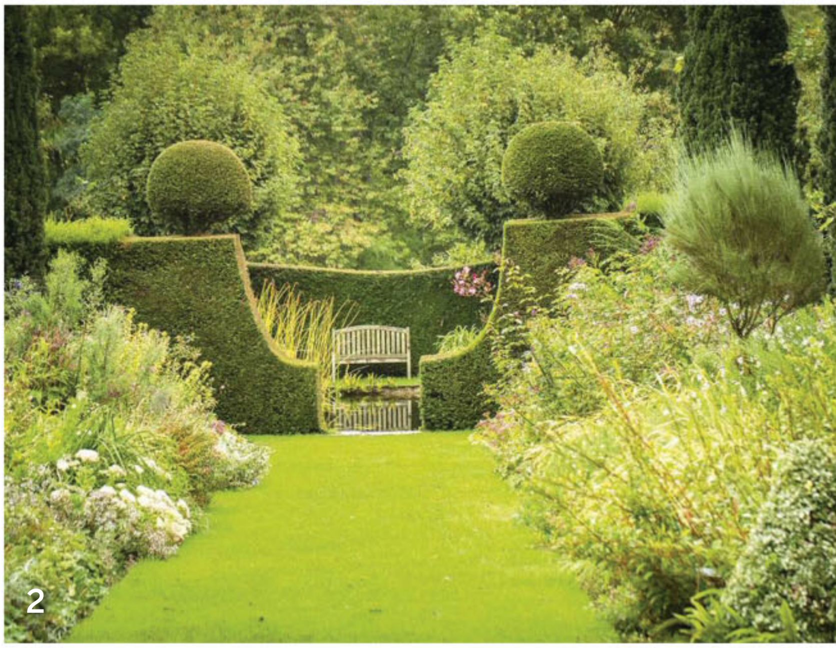
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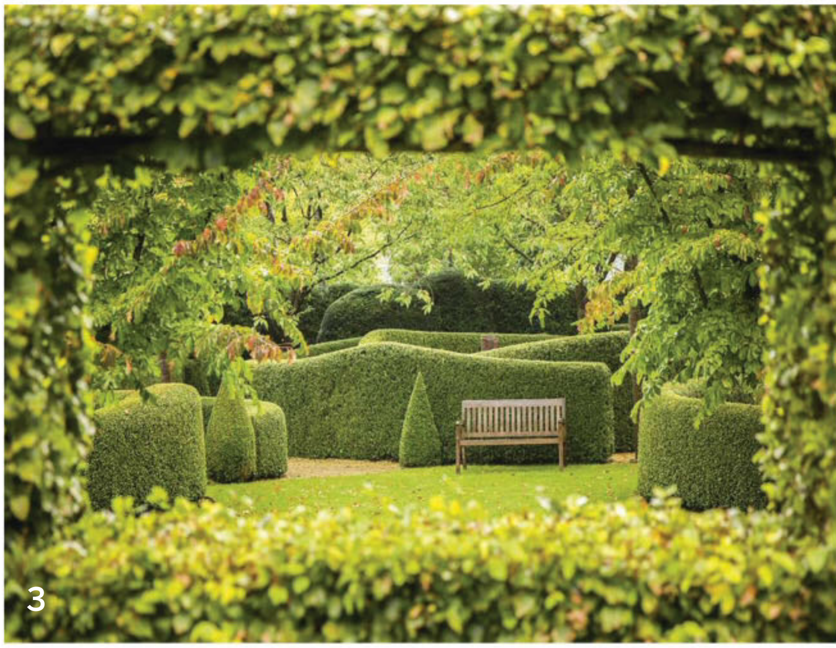
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▷ photographs overlaid with tracing paper. A friend did all the cloud and topiary pruning for us. My husband was always good on trees. I did all the planting.

H In the beginning we worked together. Now it is finished, Colette is definitely the boss.

What would you say is your overriding planting style?

C I always aim for contrast: between texture and height, colour and form. I plant as though I were putting together an enormous bouquet. Above all, I plant things that are happy in their place. Look at our cornus. These are very happy cornus.

And what are your favourite plants?

C Geraniums. Not pelargoniums [Collette is celebrated throughout France for her diverse collection of cranesbill geraniums]. Geraniums are definitely the easiest – and the most interesting – of plants, especially when you are starting out. I love them because they flower forever, suppress weeds, and work with everything. I also love *Alchemilla*, the way its downy, blue leaf catches the early morning dew and its luminous yellow flower shines out during the day. Wonderful in a bouquet.

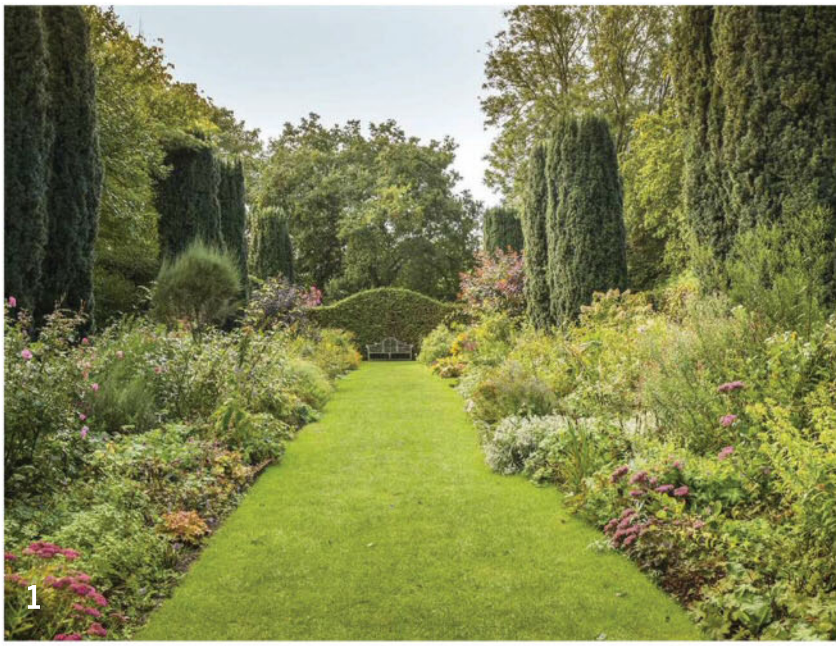
What would you say has been the biggest gardening challenge that you've had to face?

H Starting the garden in the beginning. As this was a farm, we began with around 60 cows and a large pile of manure. But we also had two farmworkers including a brilliant builder who helped us with all the hard landscaping. Nowadays the challenge is how to keep the garden going. We are both getting on and our children live far away. As for help, it's not easy anymore to find someone who knows what they are doing. In France, plant study has almost disappeared – the young no longer learn botany in school.

How then do you maintain such a richly planted garden?

H Just the two of us work here now, with the *garçon* [he is actually in his fifties], Denis Hamel, who comes in three days a week to help with the heavy work, especially the topiary. We're too old to climb ladders now. We also employ a company that comes in to cut the yew and remove the clippings.

C I cut everything back to the ground in winter, even the grasses, and carefully label with tall sticks so I remember what and where everything is. I take cuttings to replace plants for next year. Ground cover makes my job so much easier – the geraniums spread so quickly the weeds don't stand a chance. We mulch everywhere; although this year's buckwheat husks are nice to look at, they are expensive so we'll go back to wood chippings. Not pine, which is too acidic; oak is best. And I cannot endure faded flowers, so I chop them off vigorously most days during the summer. My best maintenance advice ▷

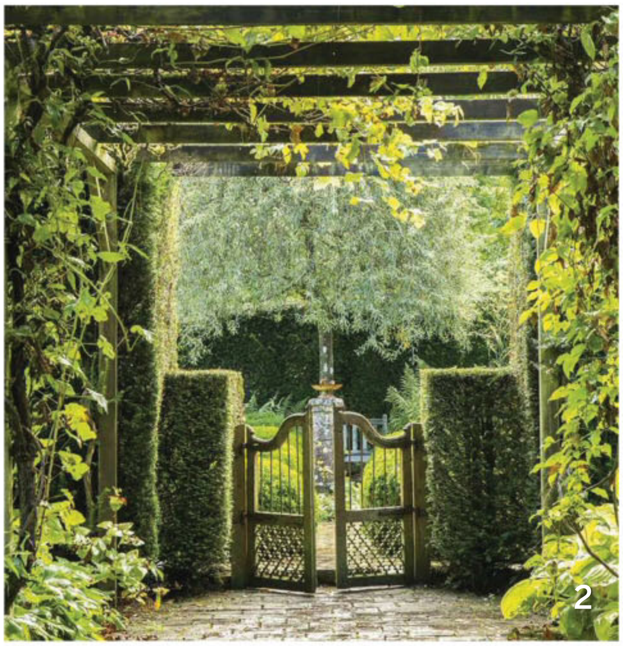


1 The English-style L'Allée des Fleurs, with its sentinels of fastigiated yew, is all colour, gusto and bravura planting: Gertrude Jekyll with a dash of Christopher Lloyd mixed together by *les mains vertes* of an accomplished plantswoman.

2 A simple but sturdy pergola leads to an Indian gate, the entrance to the Sissinghurst-inspired Aromatic Garden.

3 Just as a shot of calvados – *le trou Normand* – gives pause in a meal for the next gastronomic onslaught, so the pared-down simplicity of the Daylily Garden allows a moment to reflect before entering the more richly planted rooms.

Colette's happy cornuses, four magnificent *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata', help soften the sharp outline of the central topiarised juniper (sunk into the hedge in an immense pot), their colour reflected in the stachys lapping at the box spheres beneath.



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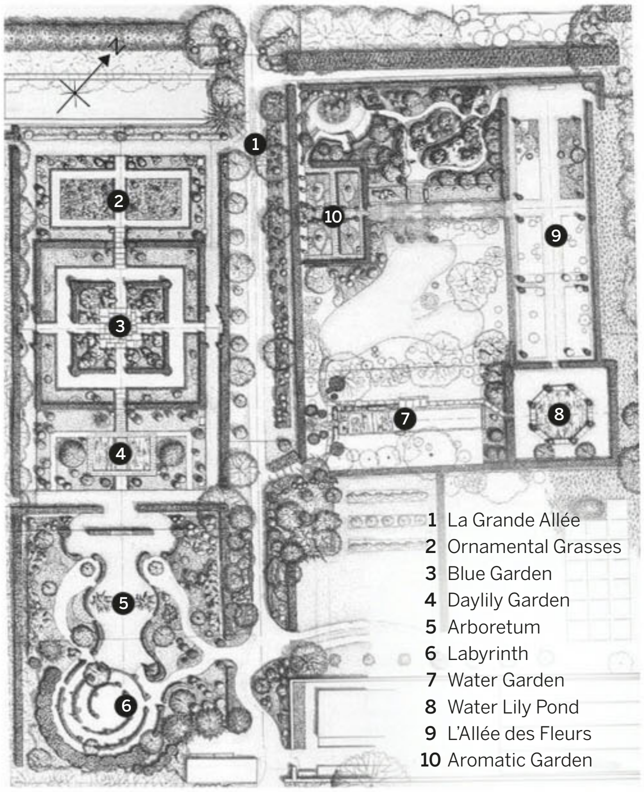
GARDEN PLAN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1 La Grande Allée
2 Ornamental Grasses
3 Blue Garden
4 Daylily Garden
5 Arboretum
6 Labyrinth
7 Water Garden
8 Water Lily Pond
9 L'Allée des Fleurs
10 Aromatic Garden

FRANÇOIS HOUTIN

▷ is something most gardeners already know: don't let your garden get out of control. You need to be in it – just a little every day. Everyone should try to manage that.

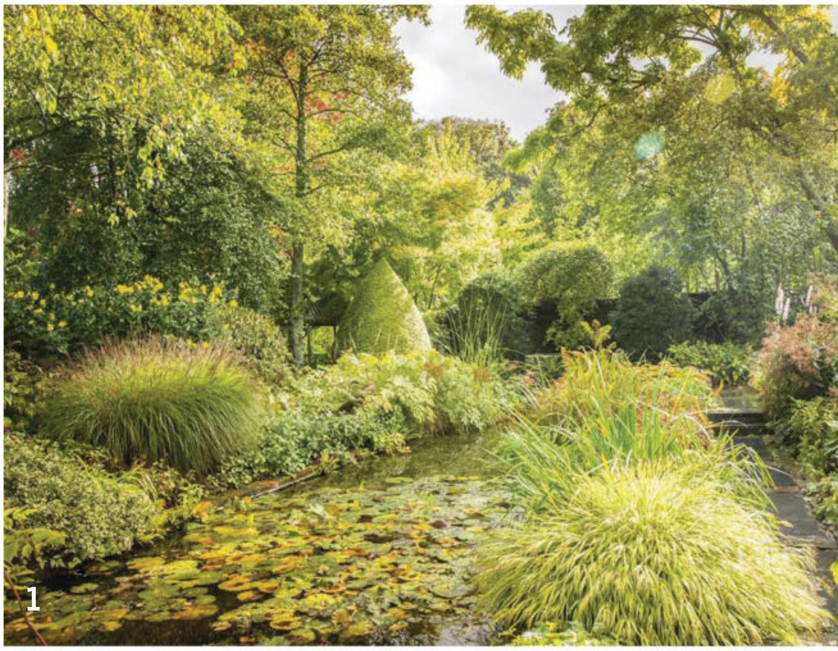
That all sounds like an awful lot of work.

H Never say that to my wife. For her, gardening 'work' does not exist, only pleasure. And passion.

C The French always comment on the work; it's the first thing they notice even before the topiary and the terraces. The English just admire the result. This is my passion. For me, there is no greater pleasure than to make a garden. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Les Jardins de Castillon, Le Château,
14490 Castillon, France.
Tel +33 (0)2 31 92 56 03.
Website jardinscastillonplantbessin.com/en
Open 1 May – 1 October, Tuesday-Saturday, 2-5pm (Sundays in June and July, 2.30-5pm), and by appointment. Admission €7.

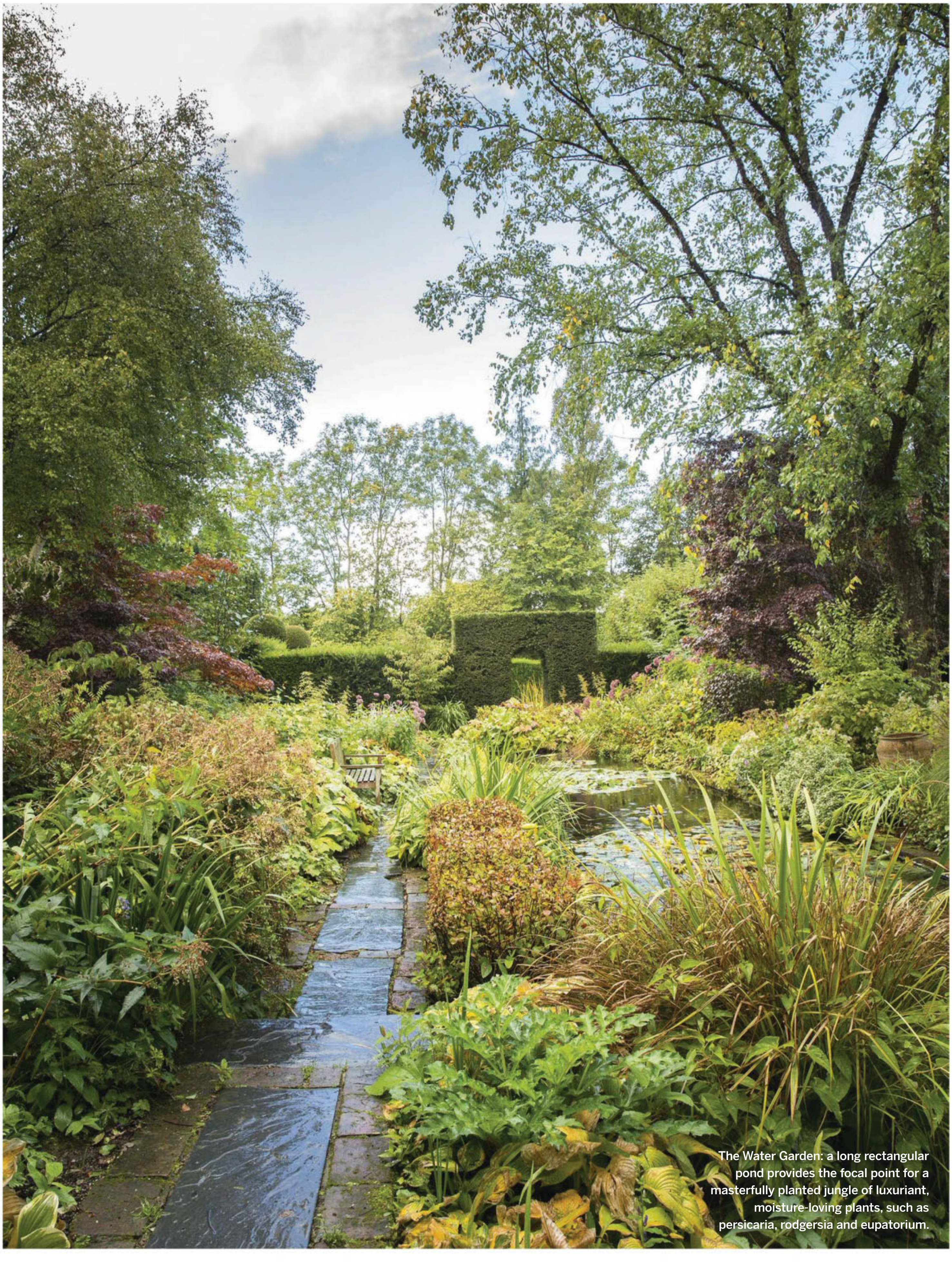


1 Box cones punctuate the apparently unruly planting in the Water Garden. "You barely notice autumn when you have grasses such as miscanthus, molinia and stipa," says Colette.

2 The bright-white *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' sings out from the fading autumn borders.

3 The waxy, pale-yellow trumpet flowers of *Kirengeshoma palmata*.

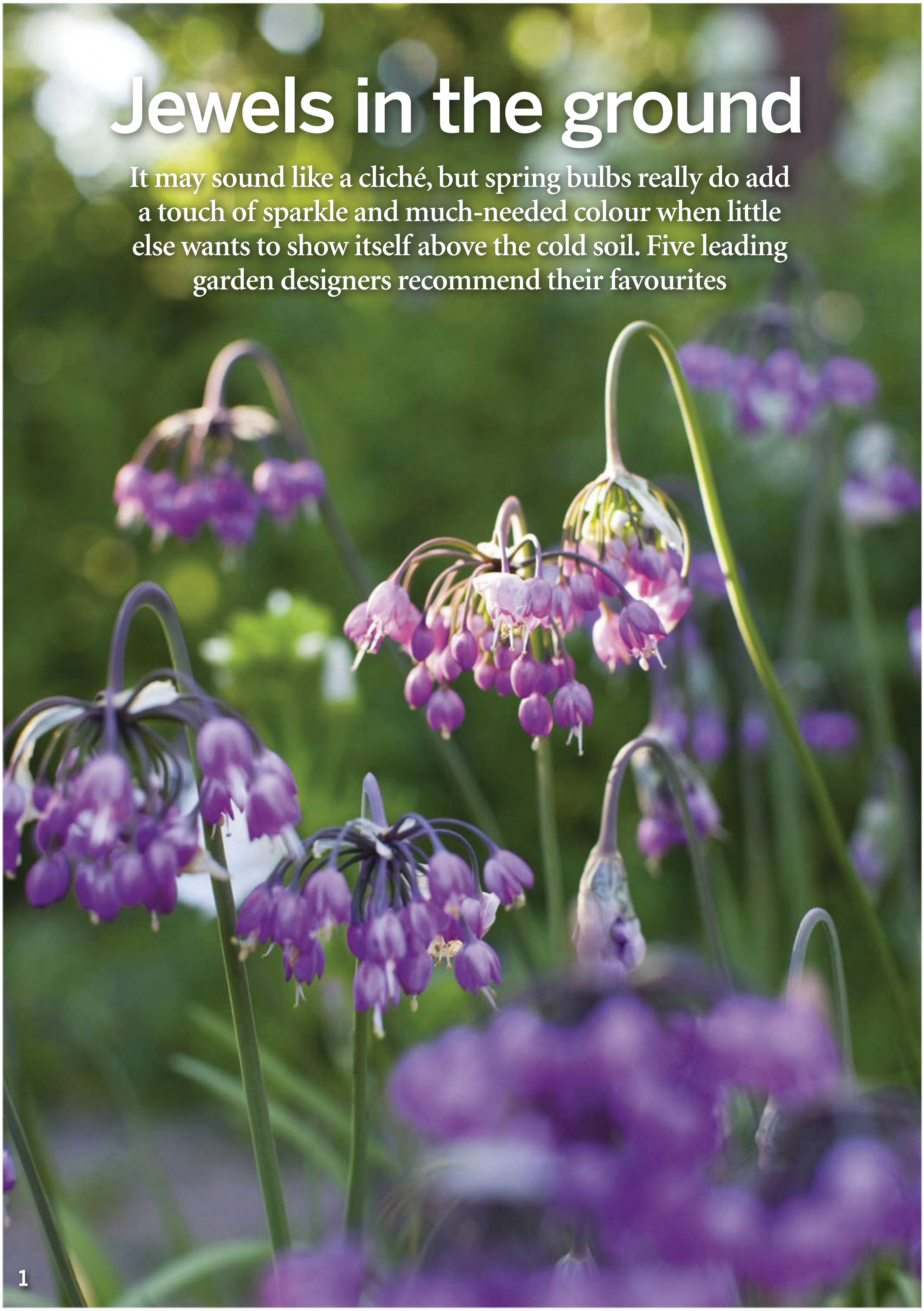
4 An ancient weeping pear, *Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula', hovers over a teak bench in the Aromatic Garden where box balls line raised beds filled with aromatic and medicinal plants.



The Water Garden: a long rectangular pond provides the focal point for a masterfully planted jungle of luxuriant, moisture-loving plants, such as persicaria, rodgersia and eupatorium.

Jewels in the ground

It may sound like a cliché, but spring bulbs really do add a touch of sparkle and much-needed colour when little else wants to show itself above the cold soil. Five leading garden designers recommend their favourites



1

PERNILLA BERGDAHL/GAP PHOTOS

N JOUAN

Jinny Blom

Landscape and garden designer

"If you do nothing else, buy bulbs. Don't try to be clever, just pile them in and let them sort themselves out."

1 *Allium cernuum*
One of the prettiest alliums with upwards of 40 dangling, rosy flowers on each head in June. Good for poking up through other things such as *Alchemilla mollis*. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-10a†.

2 *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* Caerulea Group
Originating in moist, marginal ground in the USA, this tall quamash with scintillating blue, starry flowers in May, creates an arresting sight when planted en masse. 90cm. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

3 *Galanthus nivalis*
Spring wouldn't be spring without snowdrops. If you want to be posh, then choose a hybrid, such as the larger *Galanthus* 'Atkinsii', but frankly there's no need – a snowdrop is a snowdrop. 10cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

4 *Tulipa sylvestris*
I found a patch of these exquisite, scented tulips growing in a damp meadow together with pulmonarias near my home in France, and I'm going to try to naturalise some. They are beautiful with an elfin grace about them, with two buds per stem each flushed reddish on the outside. Flowers in April. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

5 *Scilla hyacinthoides*
Scillas are very pretty and it's always worth having a few drifts. This one likes poor soil in sun as it's a Middle Eastern flower. Very beautiful and sure to impress. 80cm.

6 *Narcissus* 'Thalia'
I've lost count of how many of these sweet, pure-white narcissi I've planted. It is simply the best and most beautiful in my book – and very reliable too. Flowers in April. 30cm. USDA 5a-11.

7 *Crocus tommasinianus*
I'm always charmed by the starry flowers of this sweet little crocus, which flowers so eagerly in January. Plant great drifts of them, if you can keep the squirrels off. They die away to nothing so cause no fuss at all. 10cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

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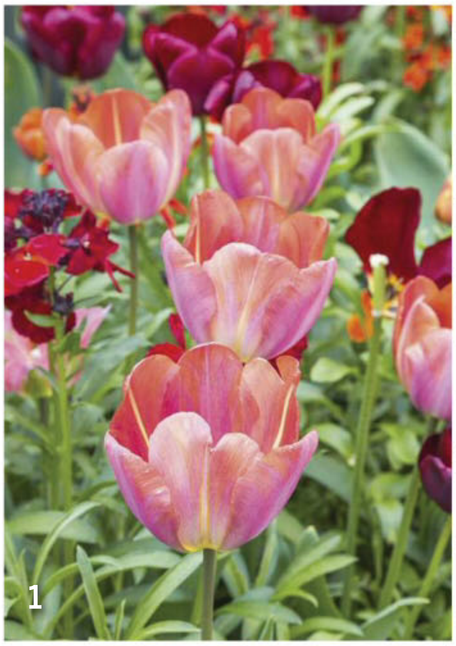
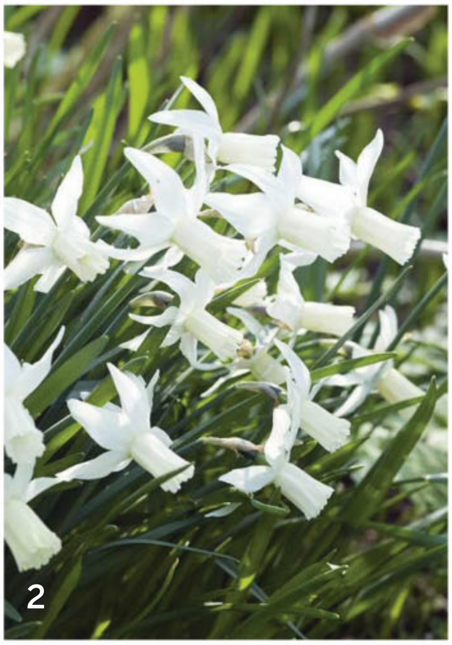
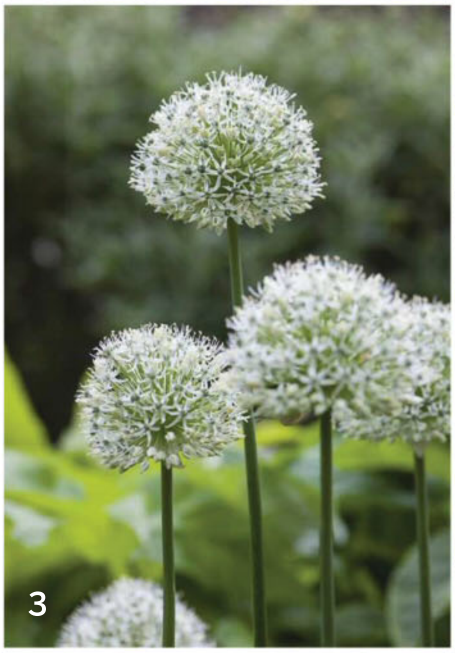
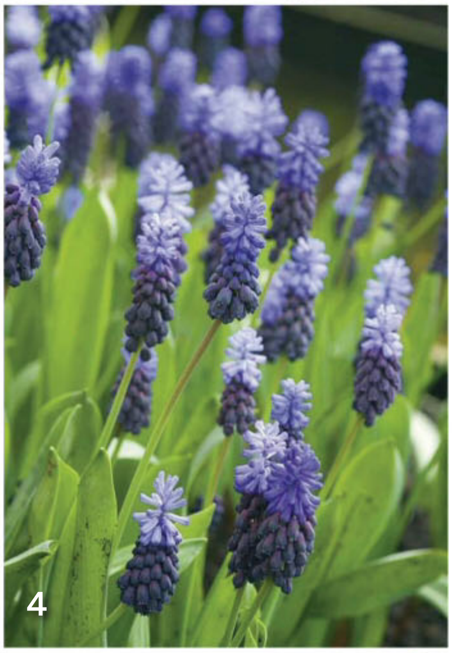
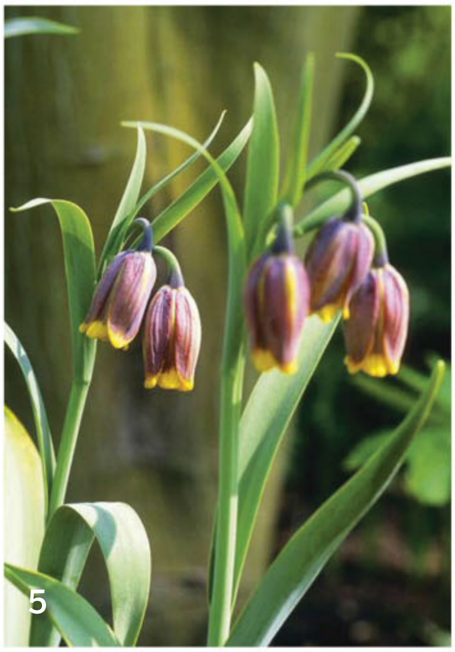
*HOLDS AN AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY. †HARDINESS RATINGS GIVEN WHERE AVAILABLE.
2 PERNILLA BERGDAHL/GAP PHOTOS; 3 GILLIAN PLUMMER/GAP PHOTOS; 4 FP/FOCUSONGARDEN/PERDEREAU/THE GARDEN
COLLECTION; 5 JONATHAN BUCKLEY/GAP PHOTOS; 6 JASON INGRAM; 7 FLOWERPHOTOS/UIG VIA GETTY IMAGES

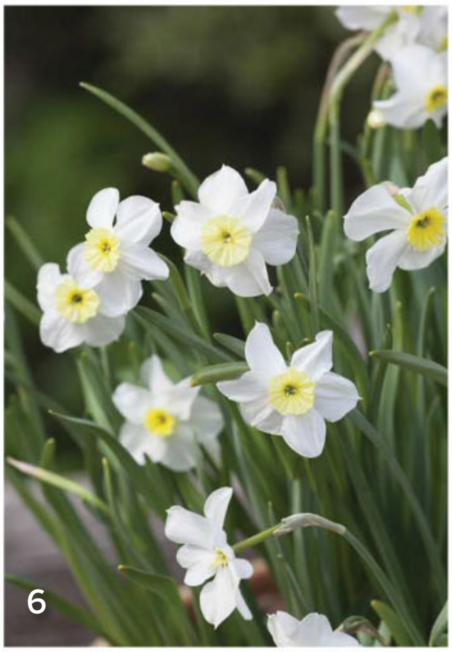












Alison Jenkins

Garden designer

"It's easy to overlook bulbs, but they add another dimension that can bring some magic at a dreary time of year."

1 *Tulipa* 'Bruine Wimpel'

Sometimes sold as *Tulipa* Malaika, this is a subtle, single, late tulip, which fades from smoky-pink to rust. Looks good with the dark-red tones of *Tulipa* 'Ronaldo' and *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing'. Flowers in April. 60cm. USDA 3a-8b.

2 *Narcissus* 'Jenny'

The graceful form and soft tones of this daffodil work well when naturalised in grass. It has creamy-white, swept-back petals with a pale-yellow trumpet. 30cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

3 *Allium nigrum*

Flowering in early June, these give height and impact before many of the perennials get going. The off-white domed heads have a distinctive green centre in each of the many flowers. 75cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

4 *Muscari latifolium*

The two-tone flowers are strikingly unusual and look as though they have been dipped in violet sherbert. Flowering in March, they look good popping up through the black grass, *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens'. 20cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

5 *Fritillaria assyriaca*

Best planted in old terracotta pots so you can bring them indoors where the subtlety of the mahogany flowers, tipped with yellow ochre, and the elegant form of their linear leaves can be appreciated up close. Flowers in April. 30cm. USDA 7a-9b.

6 *Narcissus* 'Segovia'

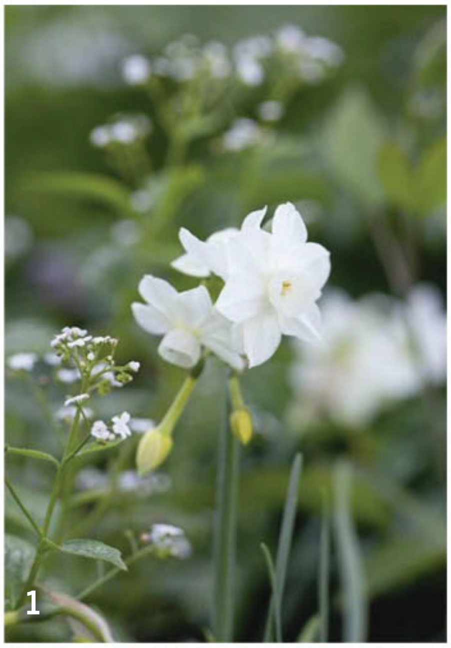
This scented, miniature daffodil has pure-white petals with an unusual flat, lemon cup in March. Plant some in a pot near your door and they will provide an air of zingy spring freshness every time you pass. 25cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

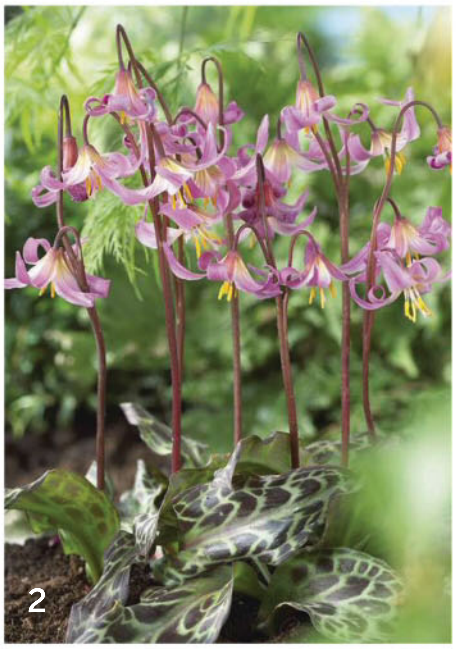
7 *Tulipa* 'Havran'

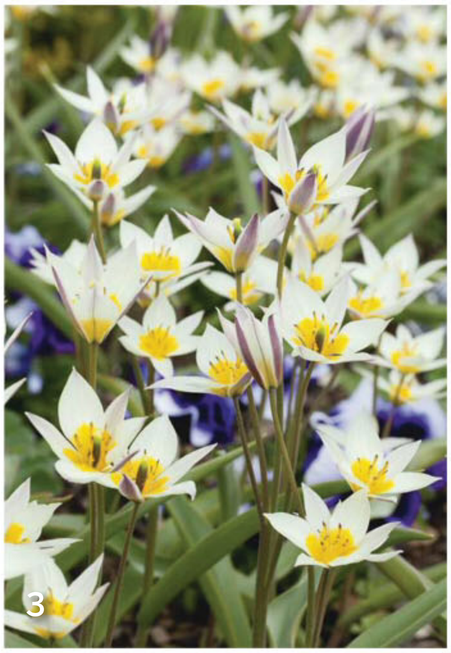
An elegant tulip with two to three inky, dark-purple flowers per stem. It flowers earlier than *Tulipa* 'Queen of Night' (mid April) and works well in pots with *Euphorbia amygdaloides* 'Purpurea' and the vibrant orange *Tulipa* 'Ballerina'. 45cm.

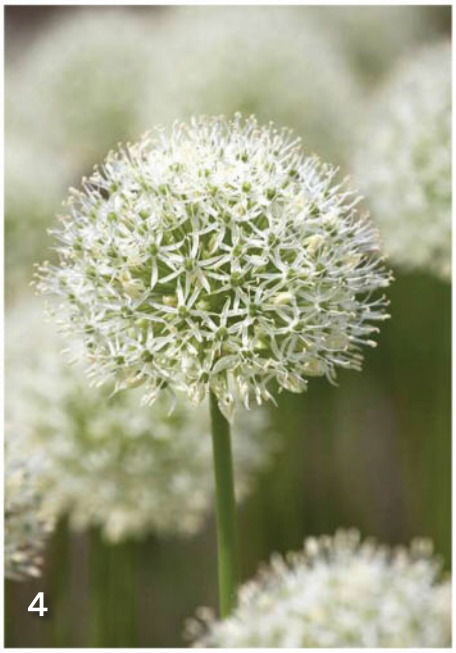
1 GAP PHOTOS; 2 JULIETTE WADE/GAP PHOTOS; 3 MARK BOLTON/GAP PHOTOS;
4 MARK BOLTON/GAP PHOTOS; 5 MARIANNE MAJERUS/MMG ; 6 JONATHAN BUCKLEY

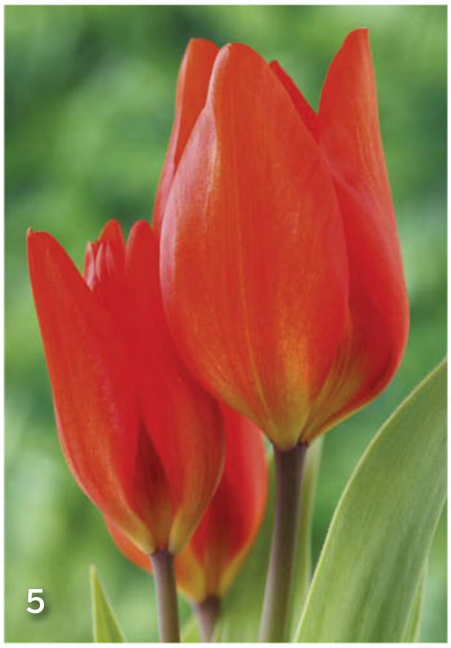
HEATHER EDWARDS/GAP PHOTOS

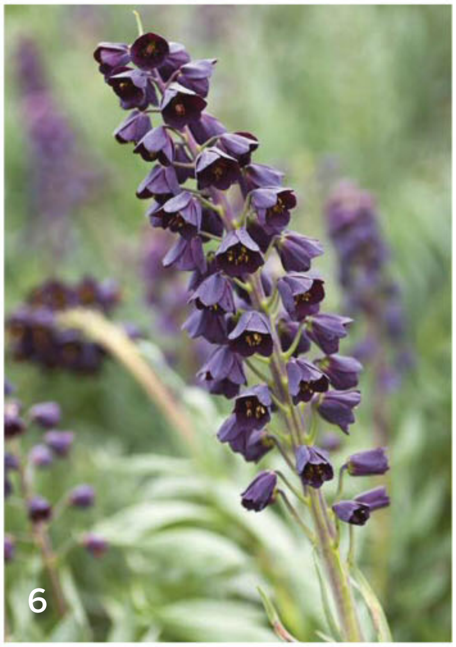












MARIANNE MAJERUS

Nigel Dunnett

Professor of Planting Design at the University of Sheffield

"The glow of the early layer of bulbs is one of the year's highlights."

1 *Narcissus* 'Petrel'

I have fallen in love with pure-white narcissi in general, and now use them widely to illuminate shady places. *N*. 'Petrel', however, is one of the best. It is relatively short, scented and extremely graceful. Flowers in April. 20cm. USDA 5a-11.

2 *Erythronium revolutum* Johnsonii Group

Beautiful, dramatic and uplifting wild plant communities from around the world inspire my plantings, and that's exactly the way I use bulbs – taking my guide from how they might grow in natural situations. In the wild, erythroniums form the most beautiful sheets of colour in woodlands – it's the sort of pictorial effect that really gets me going. Many, such as this one, have superb mottled foliage too – great value. 15-25cm. USDA 3a-9b.

3 *Tulipa turkestanica*

I use this extensively in dry-meadow plantings – I love the dainty, white, star-shaped flowers that are held by the tall main stem. It also has great seedheads and lovely glaucous foliage. Flowers from March. 25cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

4 *Allium stipitatum* 'Mount Everest'

It's not just the white globes, which appear in June, that do it for me – especially when they are planted en masse – but the rich-green seedheads that come after the flowers are also extremely ornamental. 1.2m. USDA 3a-8b.

5 *Tulipa praestans* 'Fusilier'

Another of my essential plants for steppe plantings: the multiple, bright-scarlet flowers make for a long-flowering display from March. I like the bold red and green combination of this among the new foliage of ornamental grasses. 15-30cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

6 *Fritillaria persica*

A sexy bulb. The upright form and dusky purple flowers that appear in April have it all. I like to use it in drifts of widely scattered individuals in dry-steppe or dry-meadow plantings. 1m. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

1 TOMMY TONSBERG/GAP PHOTOS; 2 VISIONS/GAP PHOTOS; 3 MARIANNE MAJERUS/MMG;
4 LYNN KEDDIE/GAP PHOTOS; 5 CHRIS BURROWS GAP PHOTOS; 6 BJORN HANSSON/GAP PHOTOS

Declan Buckley

Garden designer

"Bulbs are invaluable for injecting early season colour. The key is to think big and plant in generous quantities."

1 *Nectaroscordum siculum*
Pendulous umbrellas of up to 30 drooping, bell-shaped, creamy-green flowers, each with purple and pink markings, are carried on stiff stems. As these fade, they turn upright to form spires of erect, shuttlecock-like seedheads. Flowers May to June. 80cm-1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-10b.

2 *Leucojum aestivum* 'Gravetye Giant'
Fragrant, snow-white, bell-shaped flowers tipped with green. I have planted it among ferns on the edge of a woodland garden and in borders with *Narcissus* 'Thalia' and *Tulipa* 'Spring Green' for a more sophisticated combination. Flowers April. 45-55cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.

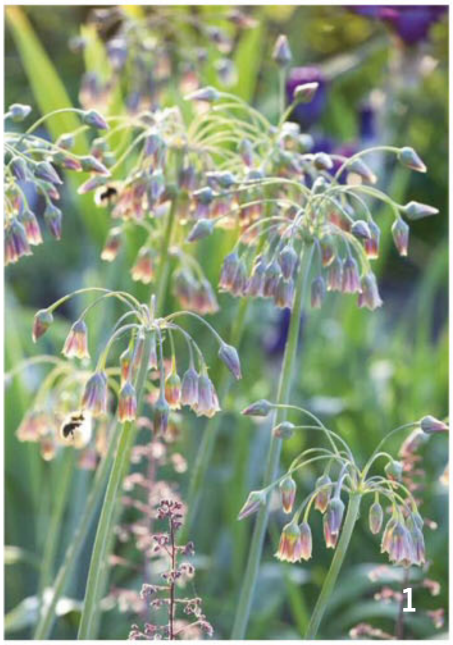
3 *Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus*
Despite its delicate appearance, this deliciously fragrant, late-flowering, wild species with simple, pure-white petals surrounding small, red-rimmed, yellow cups, is tough and sturdy. Will increase gradually over time and lends itself to many planting styles. Flowers April to May. 40cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

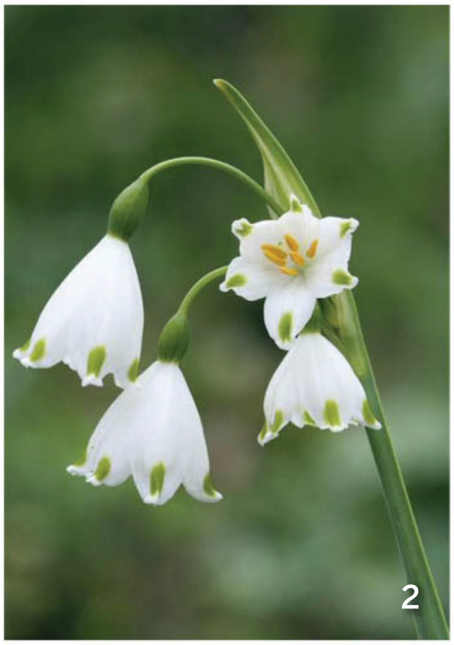
4 *Tulipa* 'Ballerina'
The beautiful pointed petals of this scented, lily-flowered tulip add warmth to late spring plantings. Set it off against the acid-yellow of *Euphorbia* and plant with *Tulipa* 'Burgundy' for a sumptuous combination. Flowers early to mid May. 55cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA4a-8b.

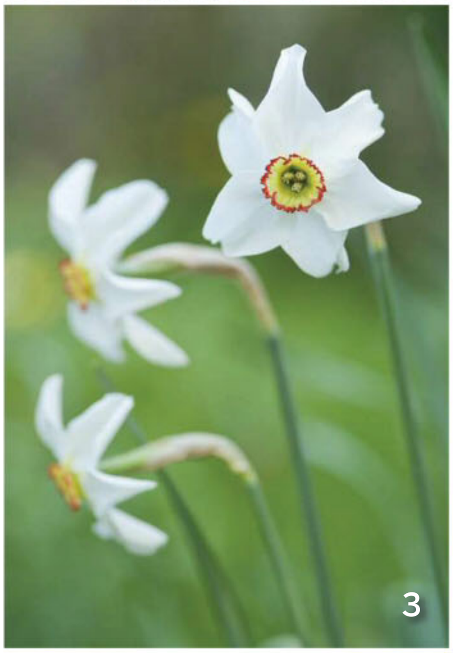
5 *Tulipa* 'Burgundy'
Rich, dark-purple, arched petals are carried on strong stems. The tight nature of the lily-flower varieties seems to help them withstand heavy rain more than other tulip cultivars. Perfect for cut-flower displays. Flowers early to mid May. 50cm.

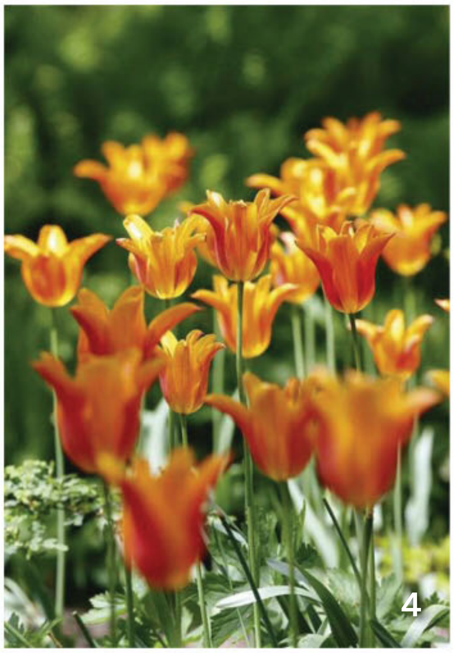
6 *Narcissus* 'Rapture'
The golden-yellow, long-lasting flowers of this little narcissus can't fail to bring a smile to your face. I plant them en masse to naturalise in a lawn, or at the front of a border or in a window box. Flowers March. 25-30cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

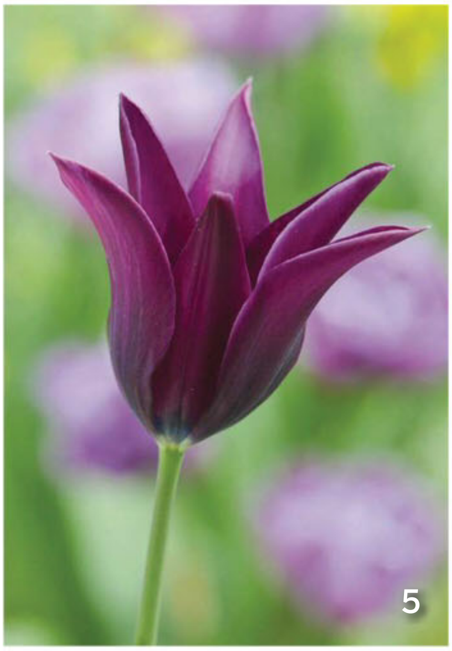
1 ELKE BORKOWSKI/GAP PHOTOS; 2 FHF GREENMEDIA/GAP PHOTOS; 3 FIONA RICE/GAP PHOTOS;
4 CHRISTINA BOLLEN/GAP PHOTOS; 5 J S SIRA/GAP PHOTOS; 6 MICHAEL HOWES/GAP PHOTOS

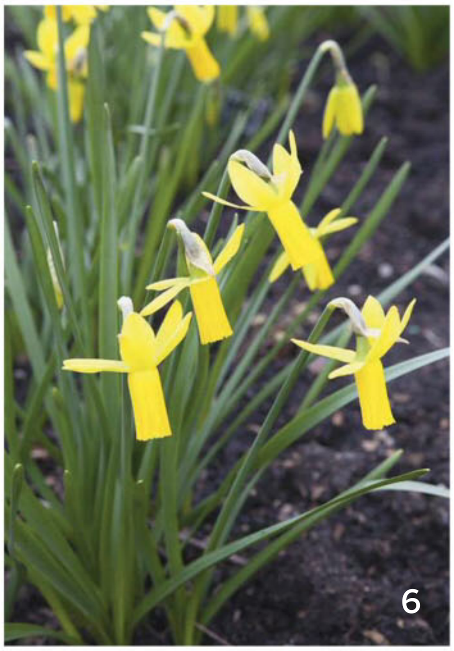


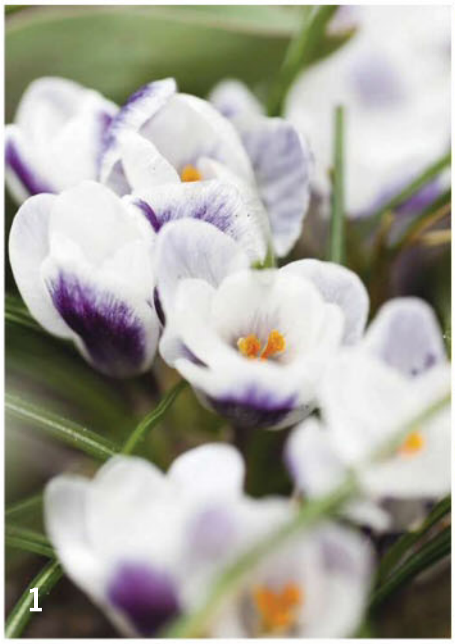












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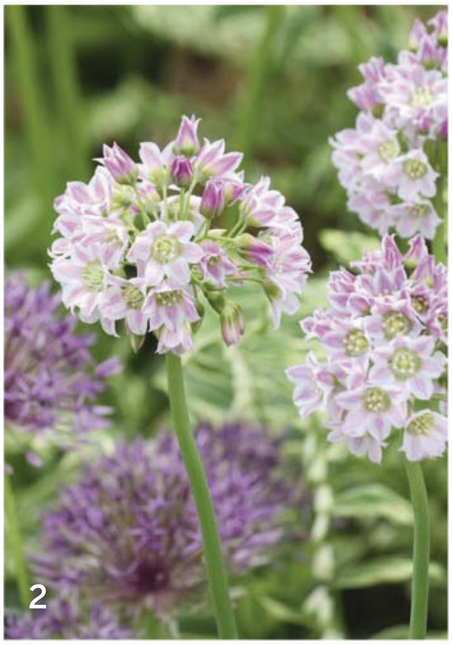

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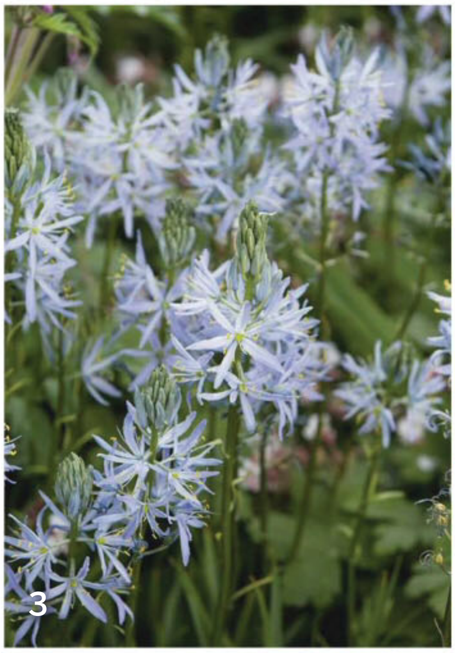

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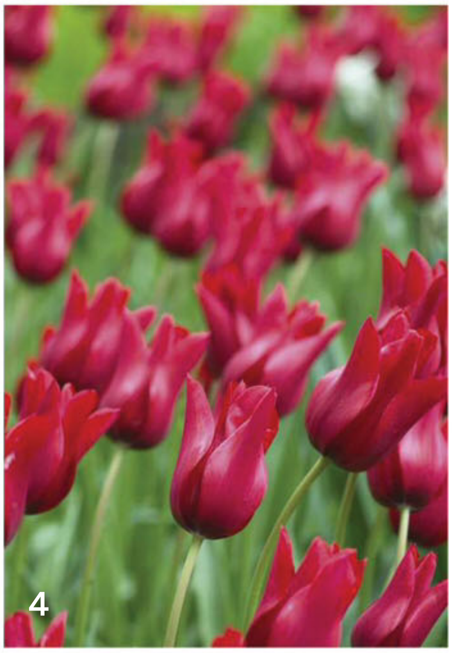

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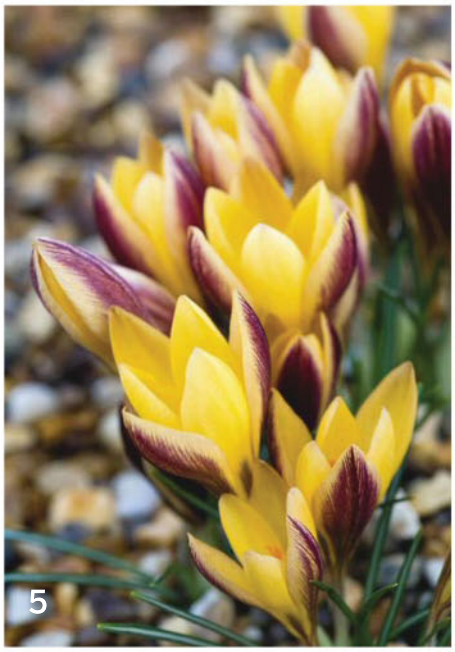

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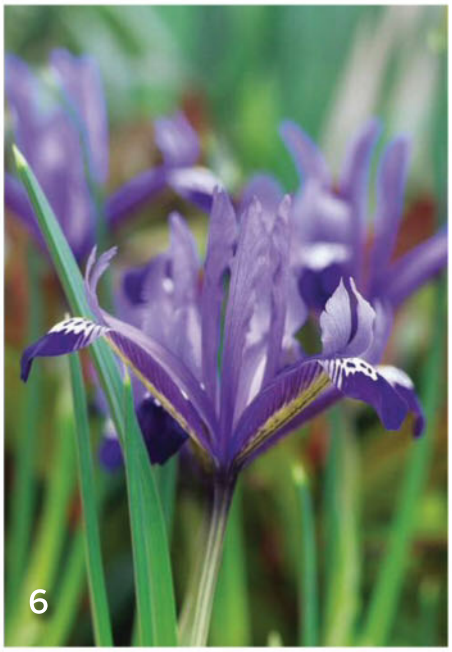

6

Annie Guilfoyle

Garden designer

"Plant bulbs in larger quantities than you think you'll want; that way you will not be disappointed."

1 *Crocus* 'Prins Claus'
A stunning little crocus, with soft-white petals featuring a broad purple flash. Although small, it packs a real punch and chases away the winter blues. Flowers in February. 8cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-11.

2 *Nectaroscordum tripedale*
This super-charged version of my very favourite bulb, *Nectaroscordum siculum*, has even more dusky pink flowers gathered in a loose allium form. Flowering in June, it reaches a magnificent height. 1m. USDA 5a-10a.

3 *Camassia* 'Blue Heaven'
Finding bulbs suitable for heavy, wet soil is a hard task but these are the answer. Grow the pale-blue flowers in large drifts for maximum effect. Flowers early May. 80cm.

4 *Tulipa* 'Red Shine'
I first saw this beautiful, lily-flowered tulip at Gravetye Manor in Sussex, its sultry-red flowers dotted through the borders looking simply sublime. Flowers in late May. 55cm. RHS H6.

5 *Crocus angustifolius*
This little Ukrainian crocus has rich, golden petals and a dark-burgundy stripe. Beautifully sophisticated, it forms a carpet of colour when you need it most. 5cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-7b.

6 *Iris reticulata*
One of the first bulbs I ever grew, in a pot on a window ledge. Flowering from January, these tough little beauties are the best plants to bring a bit of winter cheer. 15cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

7 *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*
For me, English bluebells are the bulbs that really herald in the spring in April. Perfect for naturalising in those tricky, shady corners under deciduous trees. 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 6a-7b.

READER OFFER
Gardens Illustrated readers can save 20% on a selection of these featured bulbs from Avon Bulbs. See page 108 for details.

1 BJORN HANSSON/GAP PHOTOS; 2 HEATHER EDWARDS/GAP PHOTOS; 3 MARCUS HARPUR/GAP PHOTOS; 4 JOANNA KOSSAK/GAP PHOTOS; 5 ANDREW LAWSON/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 6 JOHN GLOVER/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

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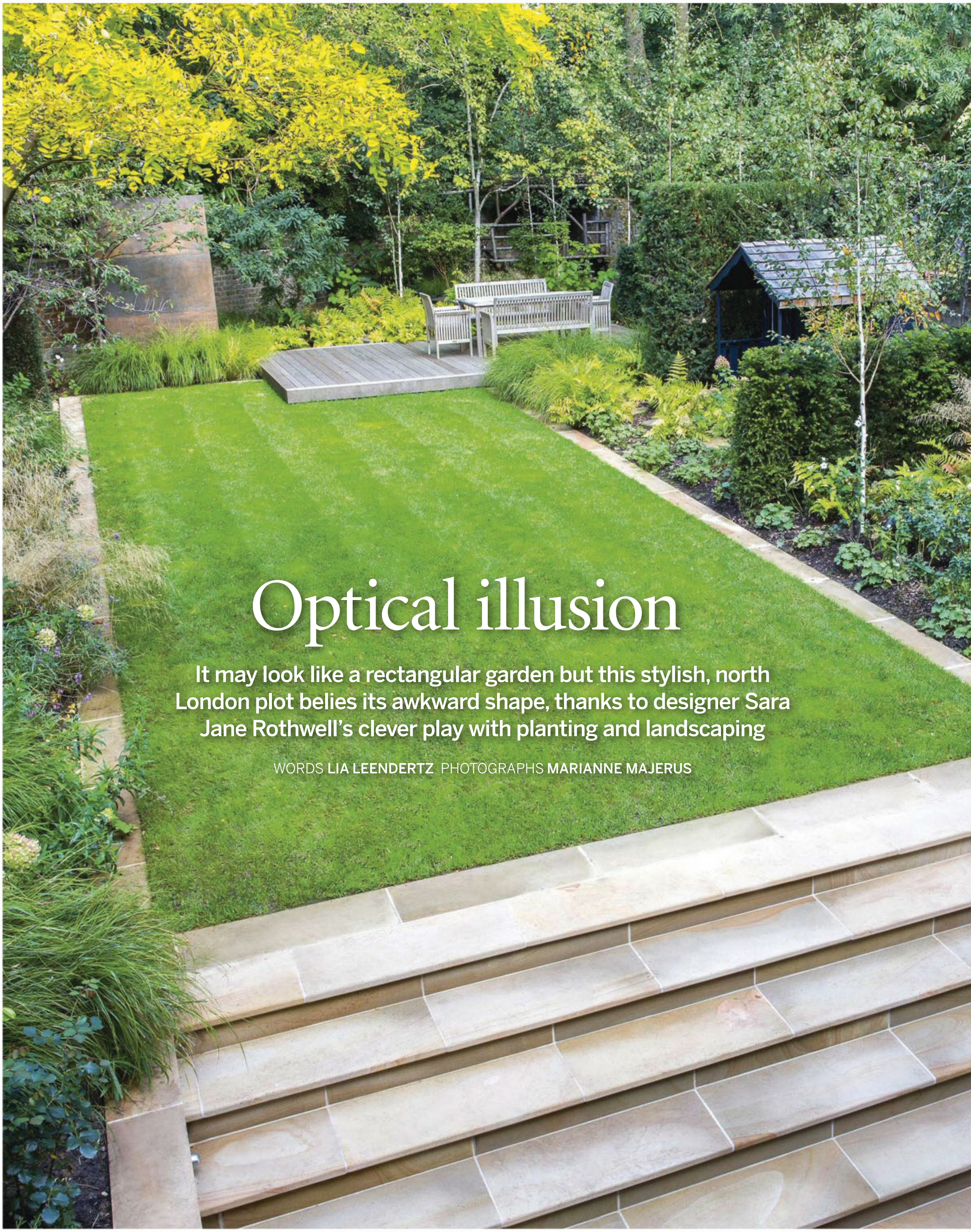
MBP-ONE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



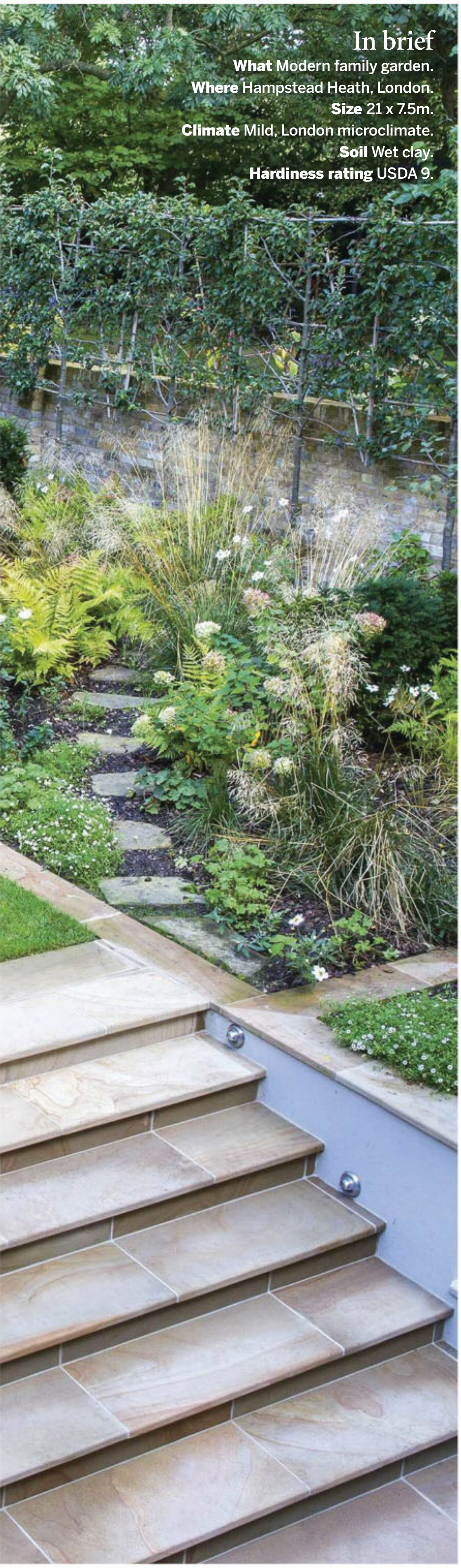
Optical illusion

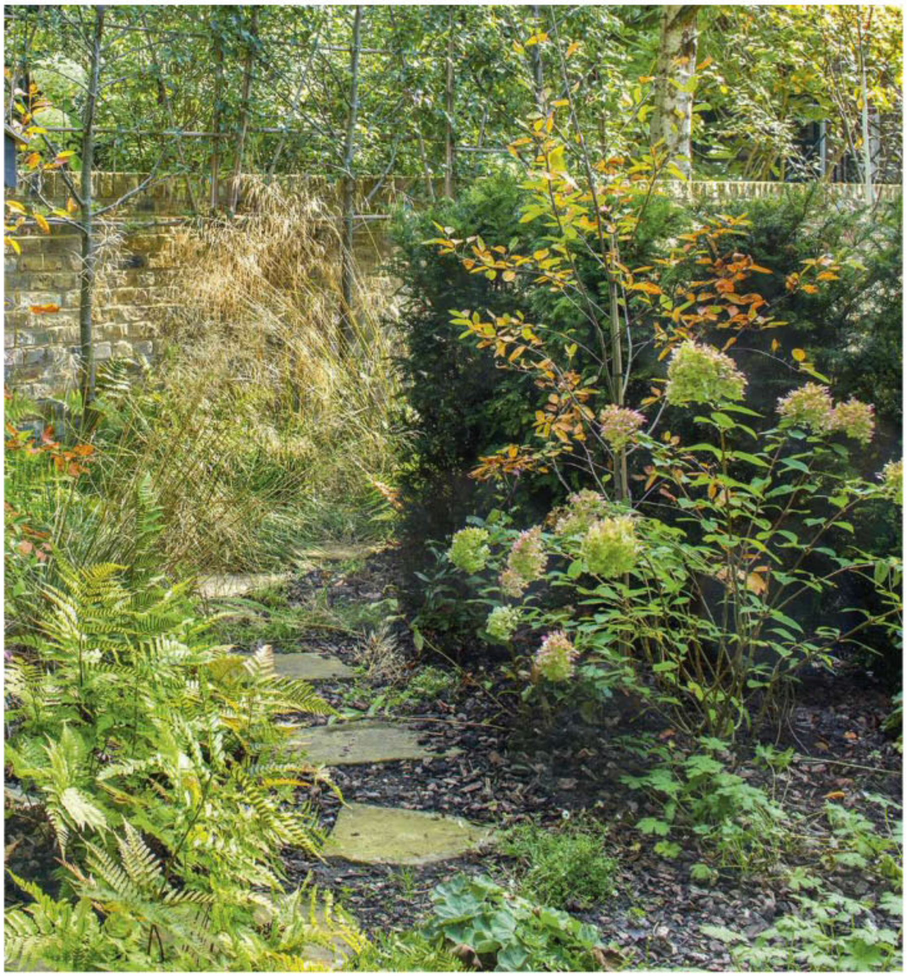
It may look like a rectangular garden but this stylish, north London plot belies its awkward shape, thanks to designer Sara Jane Rothwell's clever play with planting and landscaping

WORDS **LIA LEENDERTZ** PHOTOGRAPHS **MARIANNE MAJERUS**

In brief

What Modern family garden.
Where Hampstead Heath, London.
Size 21 x 7.5m.
Climate Mild, London microclimate.
Soil Wet clay.
Hardiness rating USDA 9.





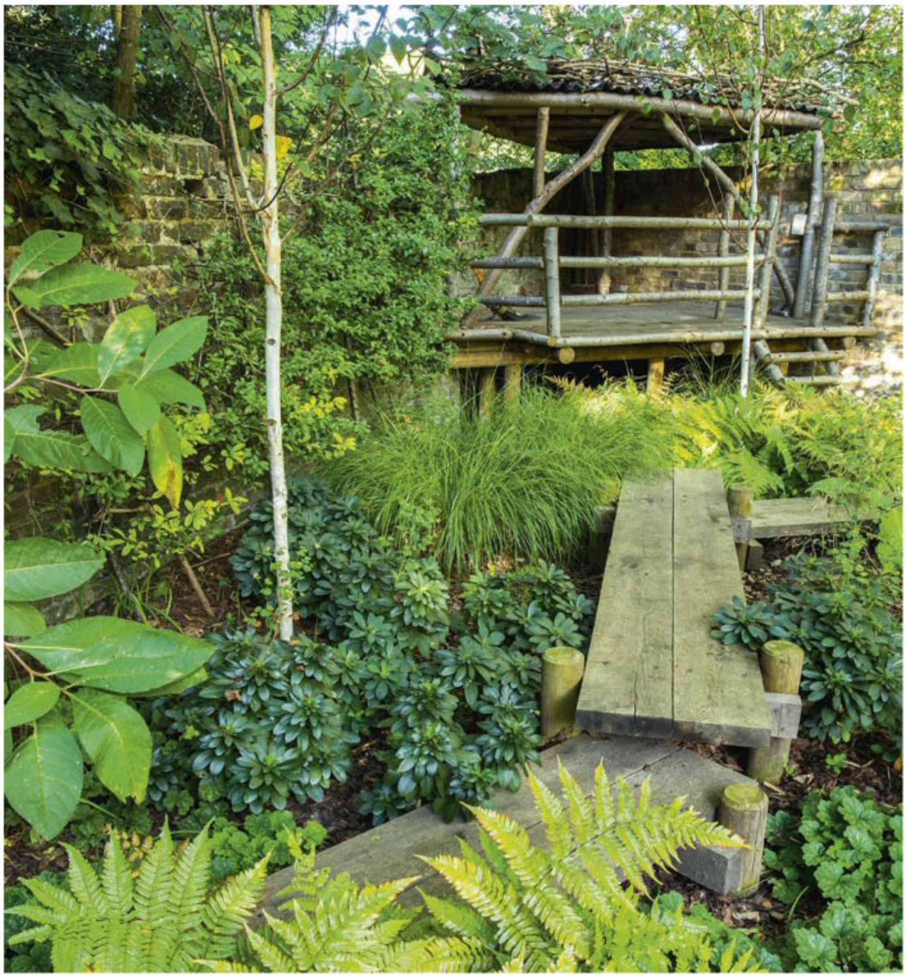
Some houses demand good gardens, and the north London house of the garden that Sara Jane Rothwell was tasked with designing in 2013 is more insistent than most. "It is a traditional building that was undergoing a sympathetic refurbishment, including the addition of a stunning, double-height glass atrium," says Sara Jane. This affords a magnificent view out on to the garden. Indeed, as you step through the front door, the entire garden is laid out before you, framed here and there by a dramatic copper-clad wall or pillar. "It does place great emphasis on the garden design layout," she says.

Sara Jane was presented with a long and unusually shaped garden (it widens gradually and ends in a triangle where it meets Hampstead Heath), overgrown and dominated by many large shrubs. Now, however, from the atrium you step out on to a Yorkstone terrace and up a flight of wide steps, designed to prevent the eye from hitting a wall at this change of level. "The Yorkstone has veins of iron oxide running through it, which picks up the copper tones that have been used in the house," says Sara Jane. At the top of the steps, Sara Jane cleared out most of the overgrown shrubs and imposed a strong and simple rectangular lawn on to the irregularly shaped garden. A large bronze sculpture at the end of one border echoes the coppery theme.

"We chose to follow the lines of the new extension to create a geometric design that belied the awkward triangular plot," says Sara Jane. On one side of the lawn the border is thin, on the other broad, but it is the strong bones of the wide and simple rectangular lawn that draw the eye, and fools it into thinking this is also a rectangular garden. The soil also proved tricky. "The site is very wet ▷

Left Yorkstone steps lead up from a terrace outside the house to a large rectangular lawn. This not only provides an essential playing space for the family's children and dogs, but also helps to create an illusion of symmetry in the oddly shaped garden. Trees link the garden to the neighbouring Hampstead Heath in north London.

Above The subtle, coppery tones in the foliage and flowers of *Dryopteris erythrosora*, *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' and *Amelanchier lamarckii* pick up on the copper cladding used inside the house.



▷ and we had drainage issues, and had to install a large soakaway and herringbone drainage system that drains into a large pipe behind the retaining walls and into the lower patio, all hidden underground," says Sara Jane. But the soil is still fairly moist and, as a result, ferns and grasses love it here but flowers have proved trickier. Roses flourish, as does *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum' and some phlox. The colour scheme at the rear is monochrome with subtle changes in foliage, punctuated with white Japanese anemones and veronicastrum in autumn. The Japanese shield fern *Dryopteris erythrosora* has been successful and its coppery foliage complements the features. "As a garden it is certainly more lush than colourful, which allows for greater winter interest. The colours are subtle and tonal," says Sara Jane. The backdrop of Hampstead Heath looms large here, and Sara Jane wanted to merge the boundaries between garden and heath. She planted a copse of silver birch trees that blends into the trees on the other side of the boundary wall and echoes several in a neighbour's garden. She planted more in the garden itself, giving the impression that a little of the heath has spilled over. "This always had to be a garden that worked well from the house, and I feel we have achieved that," says Sara Jane. "But by creating a seamless transition from garden to heath and by keeping some areas hidden from the house, I think we have created intrigue and fun too, which draws the family into their garden." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

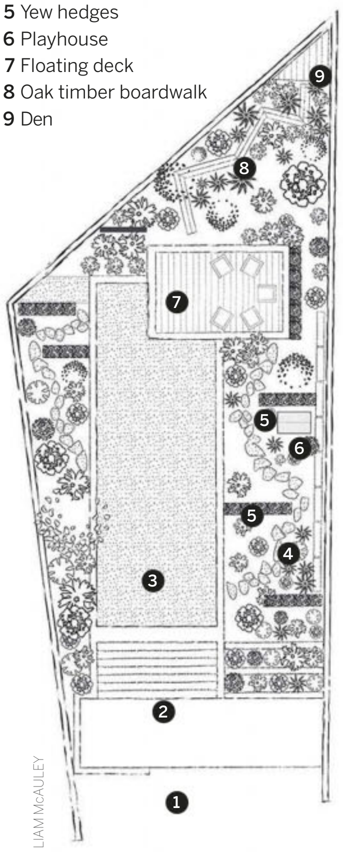
Sara Jane Rothwell's company is called the London Garden Designer.
Tel 07976 155282.
Website londongardendesigner.com

Above An oak boardwalk leads to a timber den. The ground beneath is planted with a green woodland floor of *Dryopteris* ferns, *Anemanthele lessoniana* grass and *Euphorbia amygdaloides*.

Right A double-floored, glass atrium allows broad views over the garden from the house, while light-canopied trees *Prunus* x *subhirtella* 'Autumnalis' and *Robinia pseudoacacia* – here underplanted with *Deschampsia cespitosa* and *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum' – provide subtle privacy from neighbours.

GARDEN PLAN

1 House
2 Yorkstone terrace and steps
3 Lawn
4 Pathway
5 Yew hedges
6 Playhouse
7 Floating deck
8 Oak timber boardwalk
9 Den



LIAM McAULEY

Family gardens

Sara Jane talks through the features she used for this child-friendly garden

1 Children are inventive, inquisitive and resourceful. I find that their imagination makes better use of a garden space when it isn't specially designed for them.
2 An oak timber boardwalk behind the deck transports you above the planting to a hidden den made from chestnut logs to blend in with the landscape.
3 Clipped taxus hedging creates discreet partitions and can obscure play areas. A second, more traditional, playhouse has been incorporated into the garden, hidden from view by staggered sections of yew hedging.
4 The sunniest spot is towards the rear of the garden, so I created a floating deck with a sunken firepit for the whole family to gather in the garden together.
5 With three children and two dogs, the family wanted a large lawn. It makes up the main sweep of the garden and is framed by stone banding and steps.

Hydrangeas

Renowned for their remarkable flower heads, which come in a range of pretty colours, these versatile garden staples are back in fashion and are as simple as ever to grow

WORDS **ANDY McINDOE** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREA JONES**

In brief

What There are around 30 species of hydrangea. Mostly deciduous shrubs but one or two evergreens and climbers. Many are easy-to-grow garden plants with long flowering seasons and a wide variety of uses.

Origins Eastern Asia, especially Japan, as well as North and South America. They are mostly hardy, some extremely so, however, new growth can be susceptible to frost.

Season The majority bloom in summer and autumn with the emphasis on late summer when most other flowering shrubs are past their best.

Size From 90cm to 3m in height. Most garden types rarely grow to more than 1.8m with a similar spread.

Conditions Any fertile soil that is not too dry. Hydrangeas like water and resent drought. Soil type can affect the flower colour of some species and cultivars.

***HYDRANGEA* 'PREZIOSA'** Strong growing with purple-red stems and red-flushed new leaves, colouring red-purple in autumn. Large, deep-pink heads of sterile florets similar to a mophead hydrangea. 1.5m. AGM*. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b†.

GAP PHOTOS/NICOLA STOCKEN

Andy McIndoe is a horticulturist and author with a special interest in trees and shrubs. He has been responsible for 25 gold-medal winning exhibits at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Hydrangeas have been a feature of gardens for as long as I can remember. It seems they have always coloured the Cornish summer and filled suburban gardens with their heavy foliage and flamboyant flowers. Perhaps familiarity breeds contempt? But, like other vintage garden plants, hydrangeas have enjoyed a revival. No longer deemed old-fashioned, they are now the trendiest cut flowers, the sharpest subjects for pots and essential planting in any shaded garden.

Hydrangeas are valuable garden shrubs that can suit any garden, from a balcony or courtyard where everything is in pots to multiple acres of fertile ground. At Trebah, Cornwall, four acres of billowing mounds of *Hydrangea macrophylla* bloom in shades of sapphire every summer.

They come in a variety of shapes and sizes to suit all situations. Most are happy in sun but also thrive in light shade and it is here that they come into their own. As long as water is available they are undemanding. They are also one of the few subjects to bloom under the light shade of deciduous trees.

Hydrangeas reward minimal attention with a long flowering period from midsummer to late autumn. Even the dried, faded flower heads of many cultivars remain attractive on the plants through winter into early spring. Admittedly, most are deciduous and I recall one Yorkshire gardener describing *H. macrophylla* in winter as "Nowt but a pile of muck and sticks" – but a little downtime is a small price to pay for such a long season of interest.

The cultivars of *H. macrophylla* are the most familiar. Forming large, mounded shrubs, these consist of the mophead or hortensia type of hydrangea, which produce large, globular heads of sterile florets; and the lacecap group, with flattened heads of tiny fertile flowers surrounded by large sterile florets. Both come in shades of white, pink

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ and blue, the flower colour often influenced by soil type. Flowers go through stages of development, the colours changing with age – an attribute developed by modern plant breeders.

These are the hydrangeas that are grown as pot plants, sold in bloom from mid spring onwards. They are now also grown in vast numbers for the cut flower market. The blooms can be cut when mature and dried to preserve their colour or left to turn parchment on the plants.

Hydrangea serrata cultivars, such as *H. serrata* 'Bluebird' (see page 59) are delightful alternatives to the traditional lacecap hydrangeas. Usually smaller in stature with slender stems, I like to think of them as the fine-boned pedigree members of the hydrangea family. Their flowering season is long and they seem more reliable than some macrophyllas.

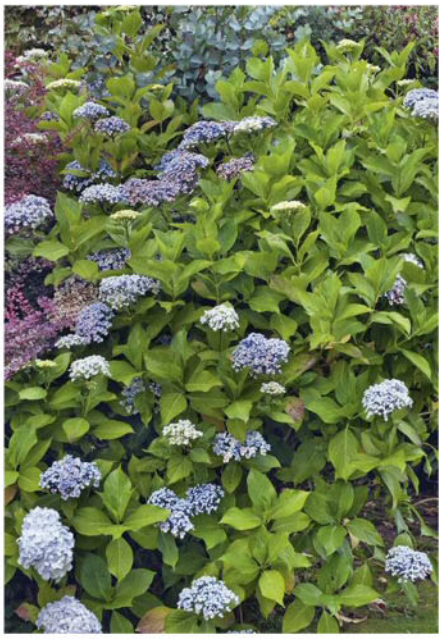
H. paniculata has enjoyed the greatest rise in popularity. Breeding has produced cultivars that produce spectacular displays of lilac-like flower heads from mid to late summer onwards. Some cultivars, such as *H. paniculata* 'Unique' (see page 57), can make statuesque shrubs that tower overhead, even when pollarded annually. Others are petite and perfect for pots, such as the dainty *H. paniculata* 'Kyushu' (page 57).

Across northern Europe the billowing *H. arborescens* 'Annabelle' (page 58) reigns supreme. Hard pruning in late winter means there are no growth buds susceptible to frost and its tough constitution guarantees survival in harsher climates. 'Annabelle' blooms on growth produced in the same year; the stems bending under the weight of the flowers – part of her charm.

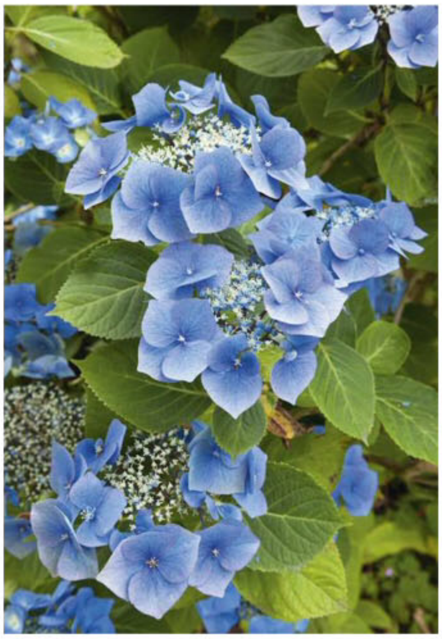
Most types of hydrangea are widely available but *H. aspera* and *H. involucrata* may need seeking out. There are many new introductions offering an exciting range of colour variation. Breeding has also developed cultivars of *H. macrophylla* that bloom on old and new wood. According to Anne Greenall of Lagg House, holder of the National Collection of *Hydrangea*, many established cultivars do the same if not pruned too hard. Certainly many of these established hydrangeas have remained popular and graced gardens for generations. ☐

• Andy's recommendations for hydrangeas continue over the next six pages.

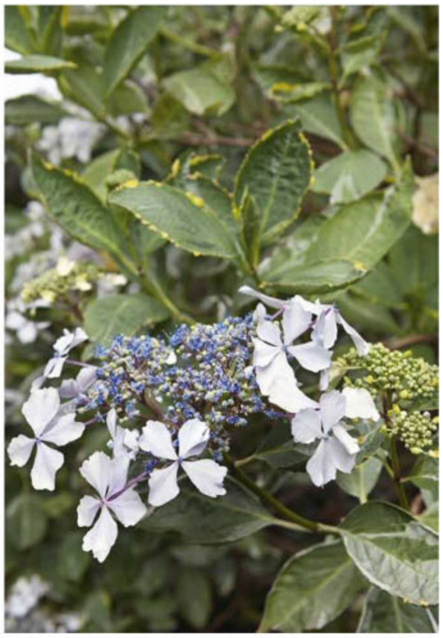
Hydrangea macrophylla



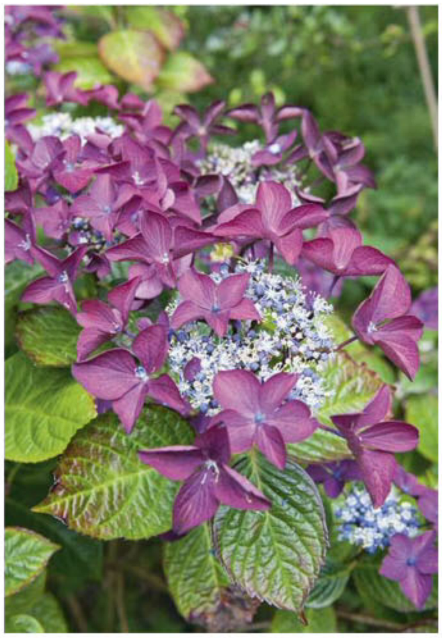
***HYDRANGEA MACROPHYLLA* 'AYESHA'**
Quite unlike other mophead hydrangeas, 'Ayesha' has domed heads of thick, sepal, lilac-like flowers varying from mauve-pink to sky blue. Delicately fragrant and excellent for cutting. 1.2m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



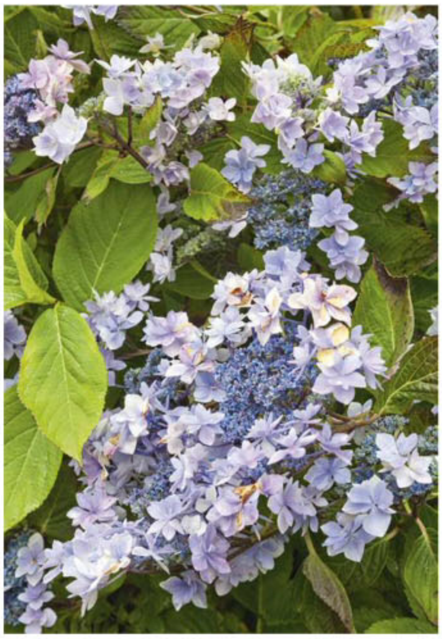
***H. MACROPHYLLA* 'BLAUMEISE'**
Large, vigorous lacecap hydrangea with deep-green foliage. The bold flower heads are dominated by dense rings of large, sterile florets that vary from lilac-purple to deep blue. 1.8m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



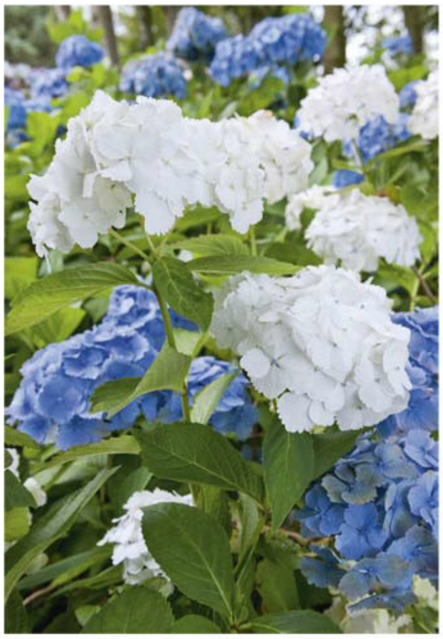
***H. MACROPHYLLA* 'QUADRICOLOR'**
An attractive shrub with variegated foliage; the leaves edged with pale-green, white and soft yellow. Sparkling lacecap heads are pale lilac-pink or ice blue; dainty against the leaves. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



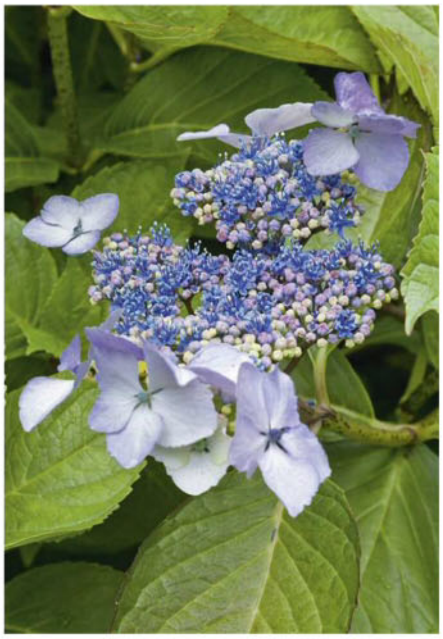
***H. MACROPHYLLA* 'ROTSCHWANZ'**
Sometimes sold as 'Red Star' or 'Redstart'. A striking lacecap hydrangea with dark-green leaves flushed red. The starry, sterile florets are crimson or red-purple. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



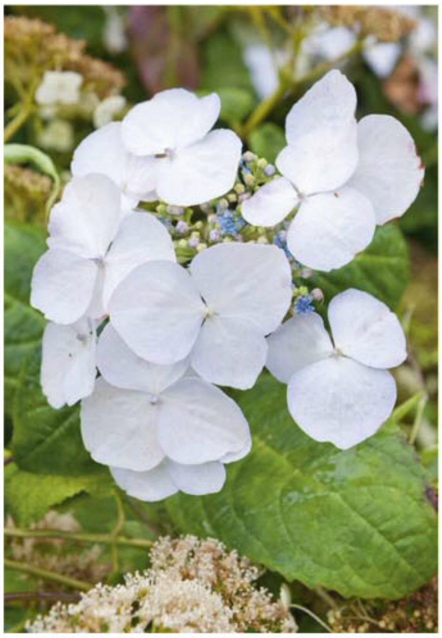
H. *MACROPHYLLA* 'JOGASAKI'
Unusual lacecap with dainty, double florets carried around a cluster of fertile florets. Varying from pink to blue, blooms are three-dimensional and less formal than most Hortensias. 1.5m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



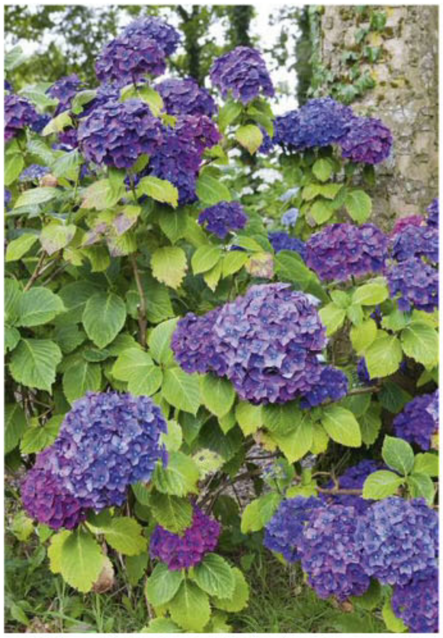
H. *MACROPHYLLA* 'MADAME EMILE MOUILLÈRE'
The finest white mophead with flamboyant heads of large florets with serrated edges to the sepals. The tiny 'eyes' vary from pink to blue. 1.8m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



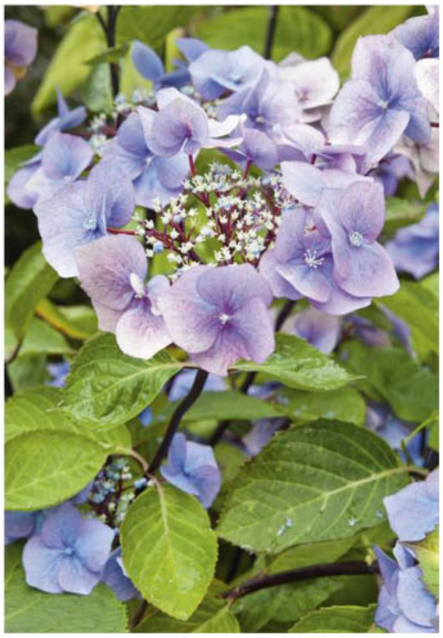
H. *MACROPHYLLA* 'MARIESII PERFECTA'
Often referred to as 'Blue Wave', this medium-sized hydrangea is at its best in a shady spot. The lacecap flower heads carry perfect circlets of sterile florets from pink to gentian blue. 1.5m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



H. *MACROPHYLLA* 'VEITCHII'
Small, bushy lacecap hydrangea with blueish fertile flowers and large, white, sterile florets that turn pink as they age. Very hardy and a good choice for alkaline soils. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

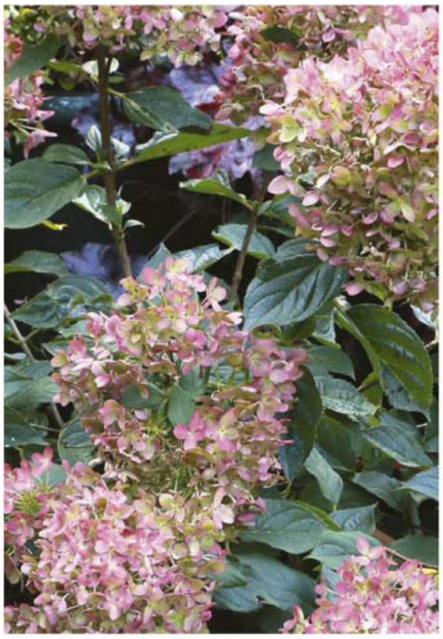


H. *MACROPHYLLA* 'WESTFALEN'
A small compact cultivar with shining green leaves and large mophead blooms varying between crimson-purple and rich, violet-blue. A good choice for smaller gardens. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

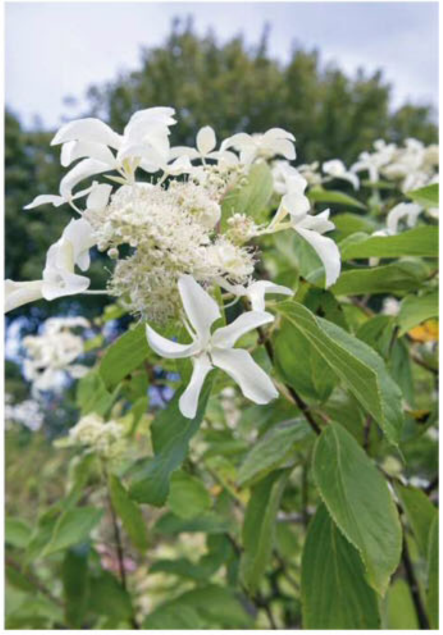


H. *MACROPHYLLA* 'ZORRO'
Vigorous, purple-black upright stems with widely spaced, dark-green leaves. Flattened lacecap flower heads carry ultramarine, sterile florets. Lighter in habit and more open. 1.8m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

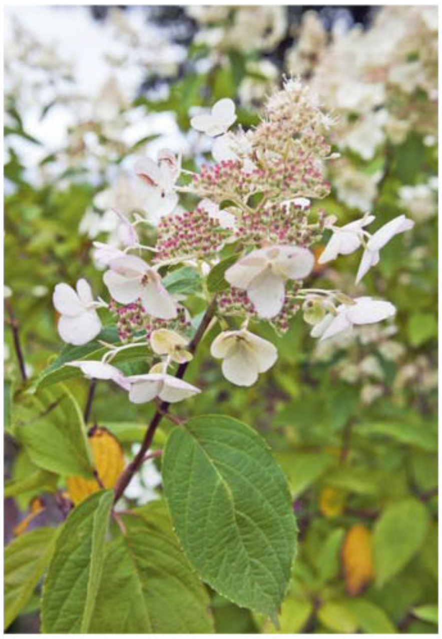
Hydrangea paniculata



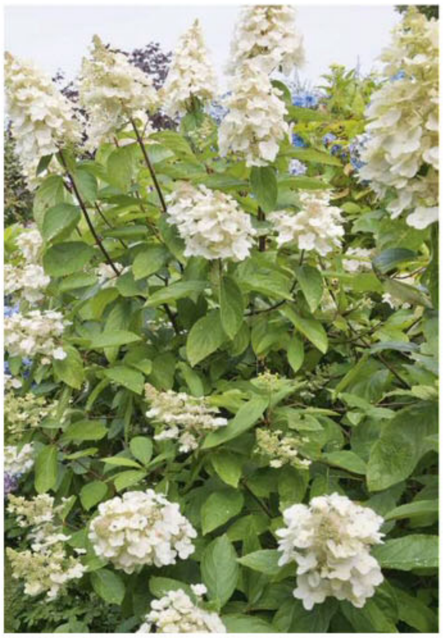
H. PANICULATA **BOBO (= 'ILVOBO')**
New, neat and compact cultivar ideal for containers and small gardens. Large, rounded conical heads of creamy-white, sterile florets that become pink, then flush green. 90cm. USDA 3a-8b.



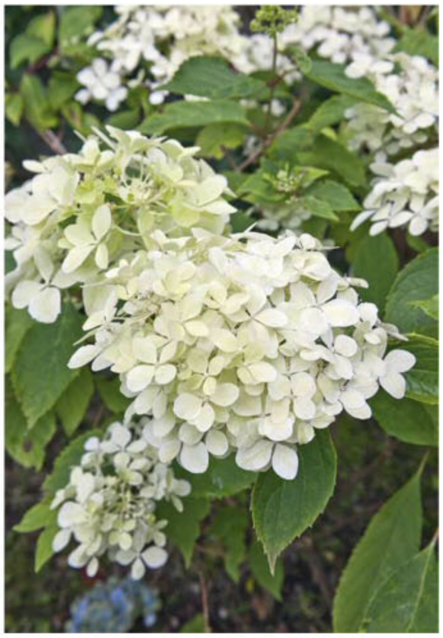
H. PANICULATA **'LE VASTERIVAL'**
An unusual cultivar with open cones of white, fertile flowers overlaid with large, starry-white sterile florets, which eventually fade to deep pink. Reliable and showy. 1.8m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.



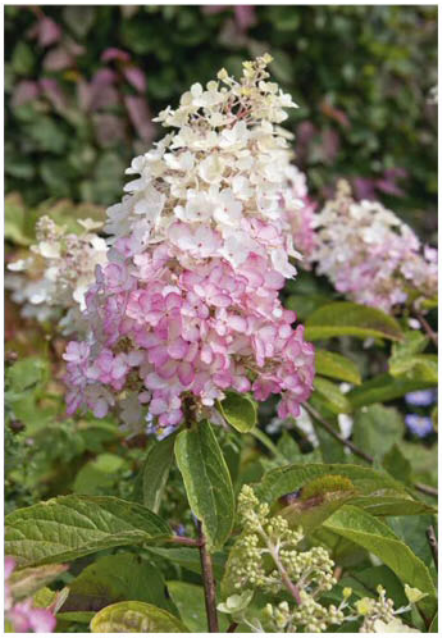
H. PANICULATA **'GREENSPIRE'**
Upright stems carry lacy cones of tiny, fertile flowers studded with large, sterile ones, green at first then becoming pink. A more open, airy shrub than most. 1.5m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.



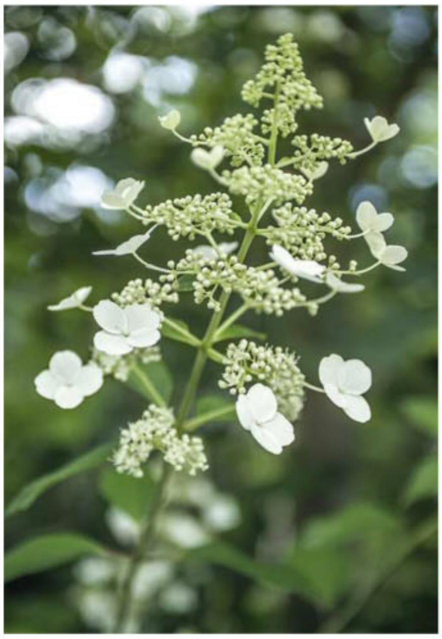
H. PANICULATA **'PEE WEE'**
A large shrub with big, compact heads of sterile and fertile florets, opening white then flushing pink. Supposedly smaller flowers than *H. paniculata* 'Grandiflora' but still spectacular. 1.8m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-10b.



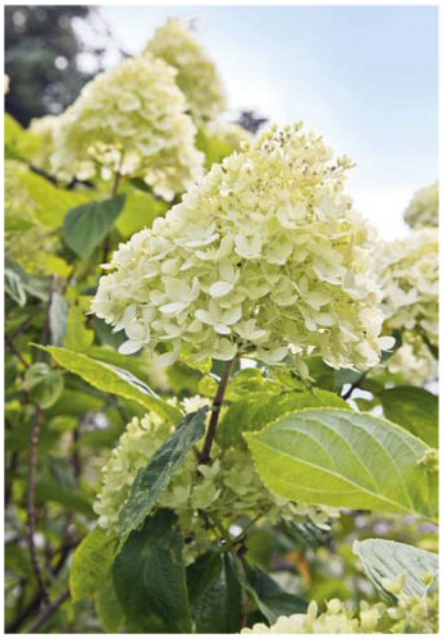
H. PANICULATA **'PHANTOM'**
Strong, upright stems bearing large heads of mostly white, sterile florets, turning coral pink by autumn. Spectacular and showy; ideal at the back of a perennial border. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-10b.



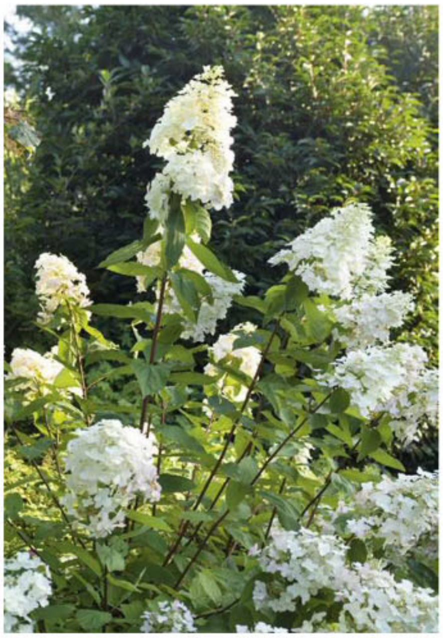
H. PANICULATA **PINKY-WINKY (= 'DVPPINKY')**
Rounded shrub carrying elongated white heads of sterile florets that turn pink from the base while those at the top are still white. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.



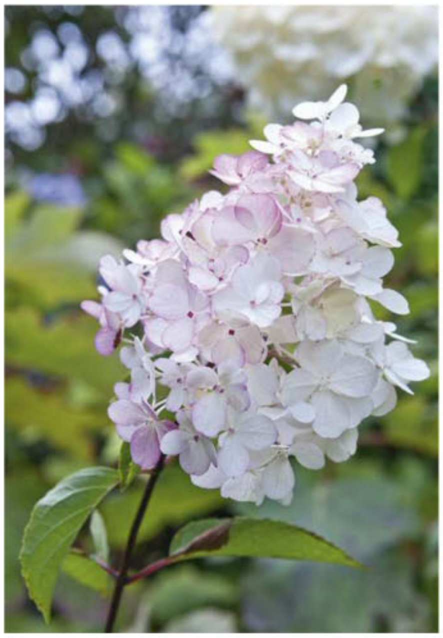
***H. PANICULATA* 'KYUSHU'**
A compact cultivar with shiny leaves and lacy, conical heads of sterile and fertile florets. A good choice for pots and ideal for small gardens. Upright in habit. 1.5m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.



***H. PANICULATA* 'LIMELIGHT'**
The most popular and widely planted cultivar with large, conical heads of sterile florets. Soft, lime-green flowers, becoming white, eventually green flushed pink. Upright and vigorous. 1.8m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.



***H. PANICULATA* 'UNIQUE'**
A large, strong-growing shrub. The flower heads are massive, rounded cones of mostly sterile florets, creamy-white flushing purple-pink, then green. Good autumn leaf colour. 2.4m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-10b.



***H. PANICULATA* VANILLE FRAISE (= 'RENHY')**
A popular cultivar with large flower heads of sterile florets, which are creamy-white turning pink. Loose and spreading, it can be spoiled by rain. 1.2m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

Cultivation

- Hydrangeas are easy to grow and tolerate a wide variety of growing conditions, providing they have sufficient water. Most are at their best in light shade and are ideal planted under deciduous trees, providing the ground is not too dry. National Collection holder Anne Greenall recommends minimal feeding, but suggests mulching with good garden compost to preserve moisture.
- When it comes to pruning, *Hydrangea macrophylla* cultivars flower best when flower heads are left in place over winter, then cut to just above a pair of fat buds in early spring. Older stems, darker in colour, can be cut to the base of the plants at the same time.
- *H. paniculata* and *H. arborescens* should be hard pruned in early spring to encourage vigorous shoots, which flower later the same year. The exception is *H. paniculata* 'Praecox', which should only be pruned lightly.
- For hydrangeas in pots, plant in loam-based growing media and feed annually with a slow release fertiliser.

Suggested combinations

Their late flowering season means that hydrangeas associate well with early flowering shrubs. On neutral to acid soils, where rhododendrons are a feature, hydrangeas are ideal to extend the season, with Japanese maples providing foliage interest. The appearance of hydrangeas can be enhanced in winter by underplanting with evergreen ground cover plants, such as *Vinca minor* and *Pachysandra terminalis*. Both can provide a shining, emerald background to the faded hydrangea heads. Hydrangeas also suit waterside planting – in Japan they can be found lining riverbanks. In this situation, the lush foliage associates well with moisture-loving perennials such as ligularia and rodgersia.
H. paniculata cultivars are perfect with herbaceous perennials, provided they are not overcrowded and swamped by their neighbours. Taller cultivars are ideal at the back of a border behind earlier-flowering subjects, such as

lupins. The lighter, more lacy-flowered cultivars, such as *H. paniculata* 'Praecox', are also useful among shrub roses where they extend the season. Both *H. paniculata* and *H. macrophylla* can make a spectacular display when grouped under deciduous trees, especially birches. Heavy mounds of mature *H. macrophylla* are the perfect foil for larger trees and thrive under a fairly heavy canopy in wetter regions. The light, sparkling flowers of *H. paniculata* are ideal to lift light shade and shine against dark evergreens.

Soil and flower colour

The flower colour of many types of hydrangea, especially *H. macrophylla* and *H. serrata* is affected by the pH of the soil. Some that are pink or red on alkaline soil are blue on acid soil. White-flowered hydrangeas are not affected but often blush pink in sunnier situations. The blue colour can be maintained in pots by using lime-free, loam-based growing media and regularly adding hydrangea colourant.

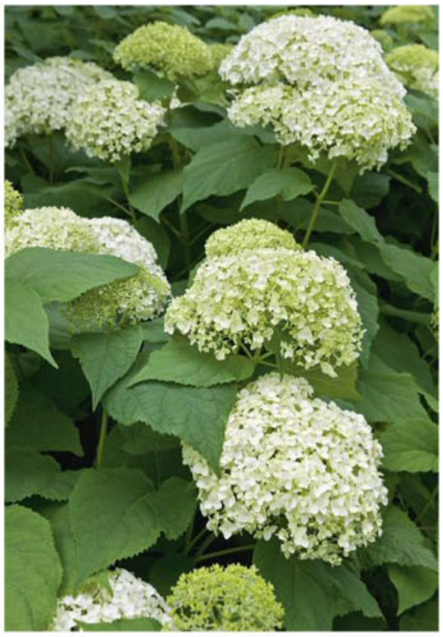
Where to see

- **Hydrangea Derby**
  Darley Park, Derby DE22 1EN.
  Tel 01332 641565,
  hydrangeaderby.co.uk
- **Lagg House**
  Dunure, Ayr KA7 4LE.
  Tel 01292 500286.
  By appointment only.
- **The Savill Garden**
  Windsor Great Park, Wick
  Lane, Englefield Green,
  Surrey TW20 0UU.
  Tel 01753 860222,
  windsorgreatpark.co.uk

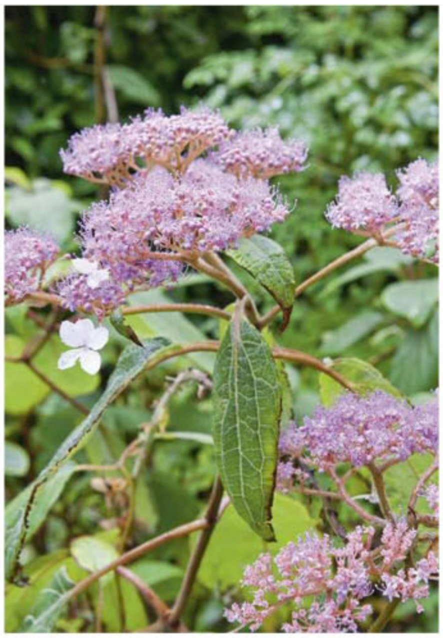
Where to buy

- **Ashwood Nurseries**
  Ashwood Lower Lane, Kingswinford,
  West Midlands DY6 0AE.
  Tel 01384 401996,
  ashwoodnurseries.com
- **RHS Garden, Wisley**
  Wisley Lane, Wisley,
  Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB.
  Tel 0845 260 9000, rhs.org.uk

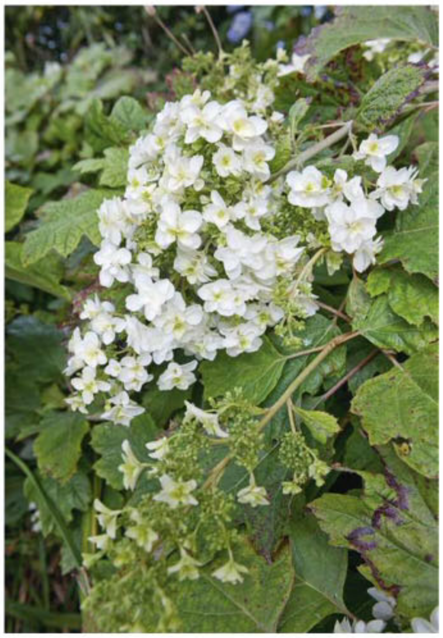
Other hydrangeas



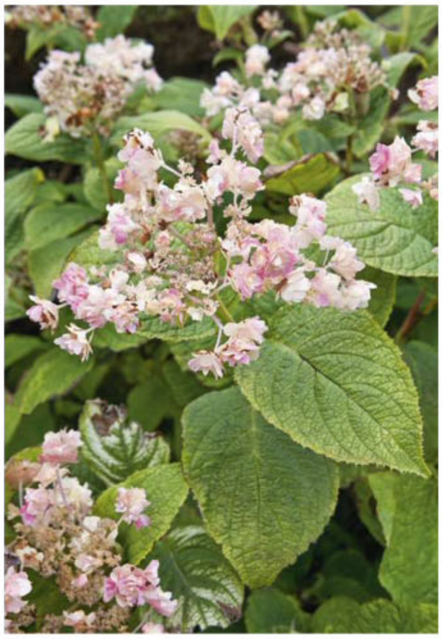
***H. ARBORESCENS* 'ANNABELLE'**
One of the most popular hydrangeas with soft-green leaves and very large, meringue-like heads of creamy-white flowers. Hard prune in late winter. Lax in habit. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.



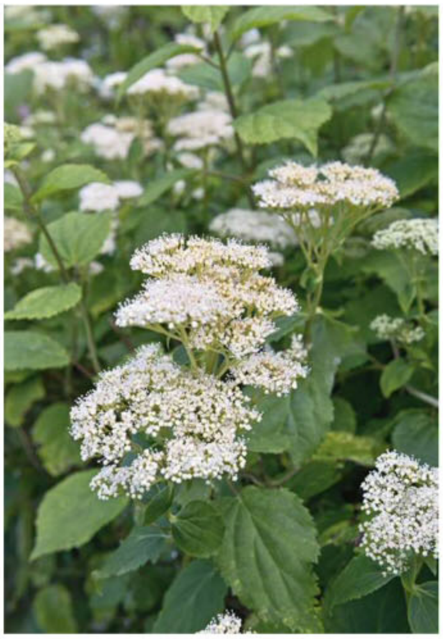
H. ASPERA
Soft, velvety, dark-green leaves and large, lacecap flower heads of purple, fertile flowers and pale, lilac-mauve sterile florets. Best protected from wind and frost, and in light shade. 3m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



***H. QUERCIFOLIA* SNOWFLAKE (= 'BRIDO')**
Arching branches carry large, conical heads of double, sterile florets, opening creamy-white, blushing pink. Dark-green leaves. Upright but lax in habit. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

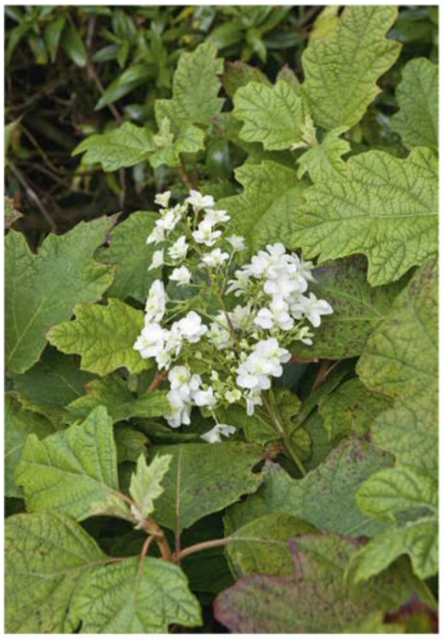


***H. INVOLUCRATA* 'HORTENSIS'**
Lovely, low-growing shrub with branched stems and soft-green leaves. Loose heads of pinkish, fertile florets and double creamy-pink, sterile florets are spectacular in late summer. 75cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



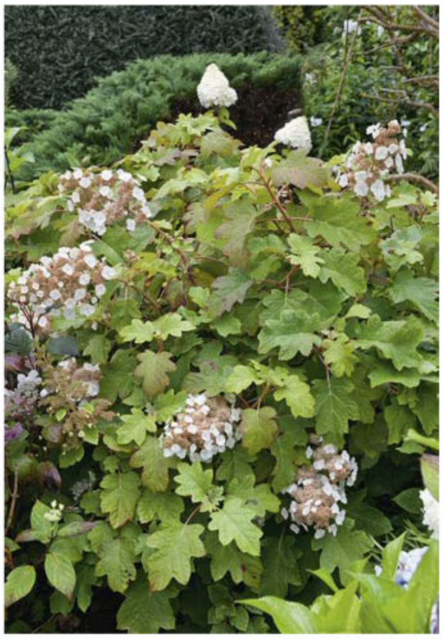
H. HIRTA

Unusual hydrangea with nettle-like leaves and heads of tiny, white to purple-blue, fertile florets in late spring and early summer. Best in light shade and protected from wind and late frosts. 90cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



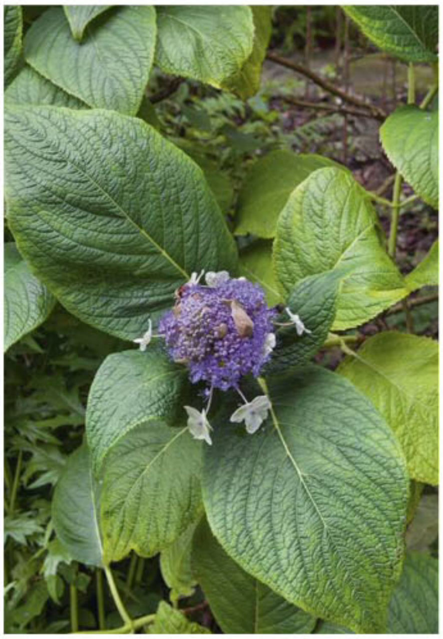
***H. QUERCIFOLIA* SNOW QUEEN (= 'FLEMYGEA')**

Upright heads of large, creamy-white, sterile florets, turning pink as they age. Dark-green leaves turn bronze-red in autumn. Upright in habit. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b.



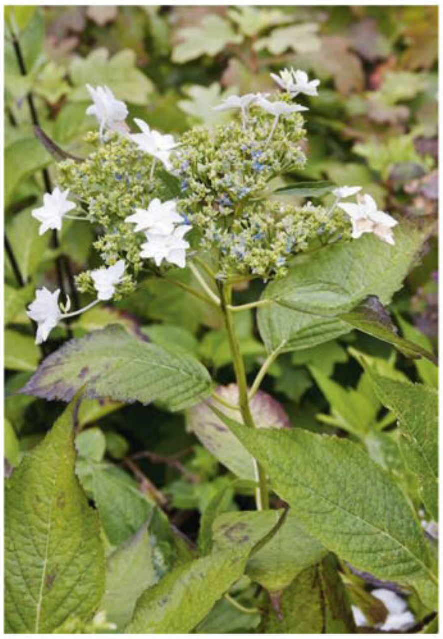
***H. QUERCIFOLIA* 'TENNESSEE CLONE'**

Large, irregular flower heads of mostly sterile, cream-flushed green florets, which are full and undulating. Dark-green foliage, which turns bronze in autumn. Upright but arching in habit. 1.5m. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9a.



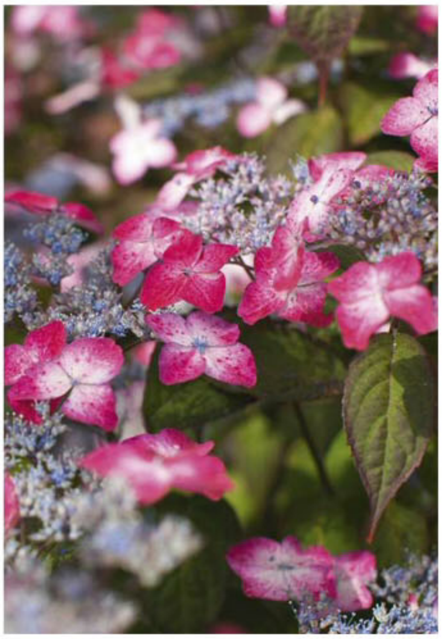
***H. INVOLUCRATA* 'MULTIPLEX'**

A recent introduction from Japan with large, hairy, dark-green leaves and domed heads of pink to purple-blue, fertile flowers surrounded by double, white-pink, sterile florets. 90cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



***H. SERRATA* 'FUJI-NO-TAKI'**

A dainty lacecap hydrangea with white, double, fertile and sterile florets – the outer ones carried on long stalks creating a sparkling firework effect. Upright and compact. 90cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.



GAP PHOTOS/PERNILLA BERGDAHL

***H. SERRATA* 'BLUEBIRD'**

Slender, upright stems with dark-green, purple-flushed leaves and dainty lacecap heads of purple-pink to gentian blue, which age to blue-green. Good for small gardens. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

MANY THANKS TO ANNE GREENALL, HOLDER OF THE NATIONAL COLLECTION OF HYDRANGEA AT LAGG HOUSE IN DUNURE, SCOTLAND, WHERE MOST OF THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN.

Christine Skelmersdale

Having brought up a family while running a successful nursery for more than 40 years, the Bulb Lady of Broadleigh Gardens is showing no signs of slowing down

WORDS JOHN HOYLAND PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

I never stop running," says Lady Skelmersdale as she whizzes me around her nursery. I'd been told that after a long and full working life she is reducing her workload, but as we talk she is fielding calls from customers and preparing for a lecture cruise followed by a visit to an allium trial before departing to botanise in the Tian Shan Mountains in central Asia. It's a schedule that would exhaust a younger person. "Ah well, you are a man," she tells me. "We women learn early on to be organised and to do lots of things."

Christine Skelmersdale has a remarkable number of achievements under her belt – among them establishing one of the country's most important bulb nurseries, being part of the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society, and reinvigorating a significant botanic garden. Her knowledge of bulbs has led to her being known popularly as 'The Bulb Lady' (her actual title comes from her husband).

Christine already had a passion for plants as a child – "I spent my pocket money on double daisies rather than sweeties" – when, aged 12, her family moved to a village in Yorkshire. A neighbour was the garden writer and broadcaster Geoffrey Smith and her local garden was Harlow Carr. "I became a very sophisticated gardener," she recalls. "As a teenager I was growing from seed plants such as *Dodecatheon meadia*."

Although she was a knowledgeable gardener, Christine never imagined that she could have a career in the field. After studying geography she went to Zambia to teach. Forty-five years ago this was a dangerous and adventurous step for a single young woman, but she shrugs off this reflection. "Yes, I suppose it was," she says. "But I wanted to do it and just got on with it." While there she met a handsome young man, Roger Bootle-Wilbraham, the future 7th Baron Skelmersdale, who was doing Voluntary Service Overseas. The pair fell in love and married.

Back in Britain, Roger, who had studied horticulture, bought a dilapidated house near Taunton in Somerset and began setting up a nursery. "The house was derelict and there was no garden but it was great fun," says Christine. The opportunity arose to acquire a collection of miniature daffodils established by nurseryman Alec Gray. Christine and Roger began to expand their stock of bulbs and in 1972 displayed their plants for the first time at a Royal Horticultural Society show.

"I was bringing up small children, trying to oversee the building of the house, running the nursery and attending the flower shows while still learning about the plants," she remembers. But she brushes aside any suggestion that this was a phenomenal amount of work. "You know, you can apply your intelligence to anything. I did my homework. I read and read. And I organised my time well."

During the 1980s Christine became involved in the RHS and in 1991 was asked to sit on the organisation's governing body, the Council. "I was speechless," she says. "I was young and a woman, which was a rarity in the RHS back then. I had also been a bit of a thorn in the side of RHS organisers. I was the one who always spoke up about the lack of facilities for exhibitors. I was well known for speaking my mind."

This was a period of huge change for the RHS. Membership increased dramatically, the society took the flower shows at Hampton Court Palace and Birmingham under its wing and acquired the gardens at Hyde Hall in Essex and Rosemoor in Devon. "It was all very satisfying and exciting," says Christine.

She became part of a small committee that supported the development of the gardens at Rosemoor. "We were like godparents to the garden and mentors to the staff; we fought for finance and resources for it," she says.

Because of her involvement in the RHS and her knowledge as a plantswoman, Christine was asked to become president of the Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden at a time when the university had decided to sell the site. She put together a team of supporters and worked with the university to secure a new site and funding to employ more staff and develop plant collections. A decade after Christine became involved, the gardens had a secure future as a serious institution.

"In each of the past four decades I have had a major challenge: bringing up a family and establishing the nursery; the RHS Council; Rosemoor; the Bristol Botanic," she says. In 2009 she was awarded the RHS's highest award, the Victoria Medal of Honour, for those four decades of work. "That was the second time I've ever been speechless. It was a tremendous honour." For the next decade she plans to continue overseeing the nursery, to travel and lecture, and to seriously look at breeding daffodils. One thing is for sure, Christine Skelmersdale will not be standing still. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Broadleigh Gardens, Barr House, Bishops Hull, Taunton TA4 1AE.
Tel 01823 286231, broadleighbulbs.co.uk

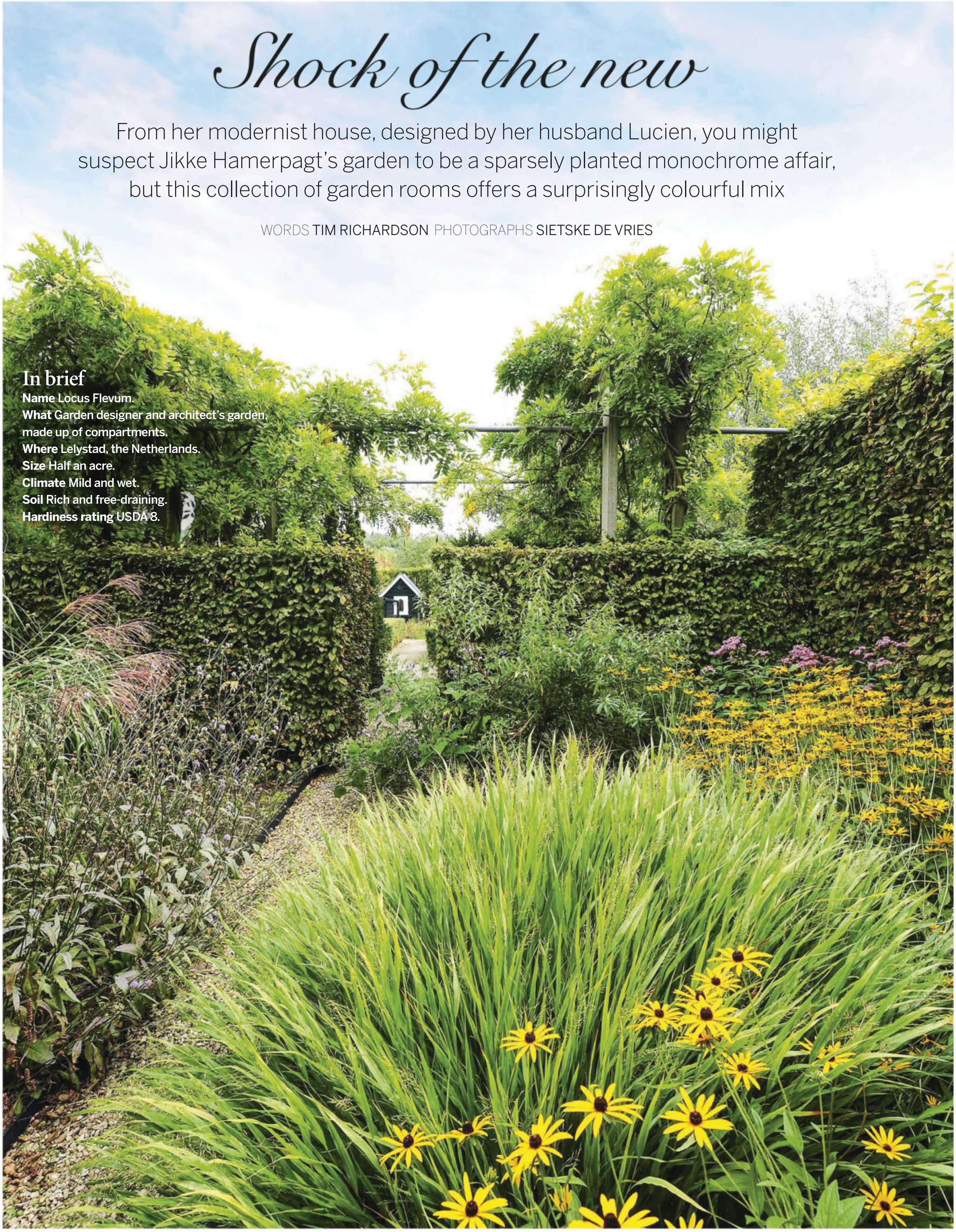
NEXT MONTH Tree expert Thomas Pakenham.

> *"You know, you can apply your intelligence to anything. I did my homework. I read and read. And I organised my time well"*

Shock of the new

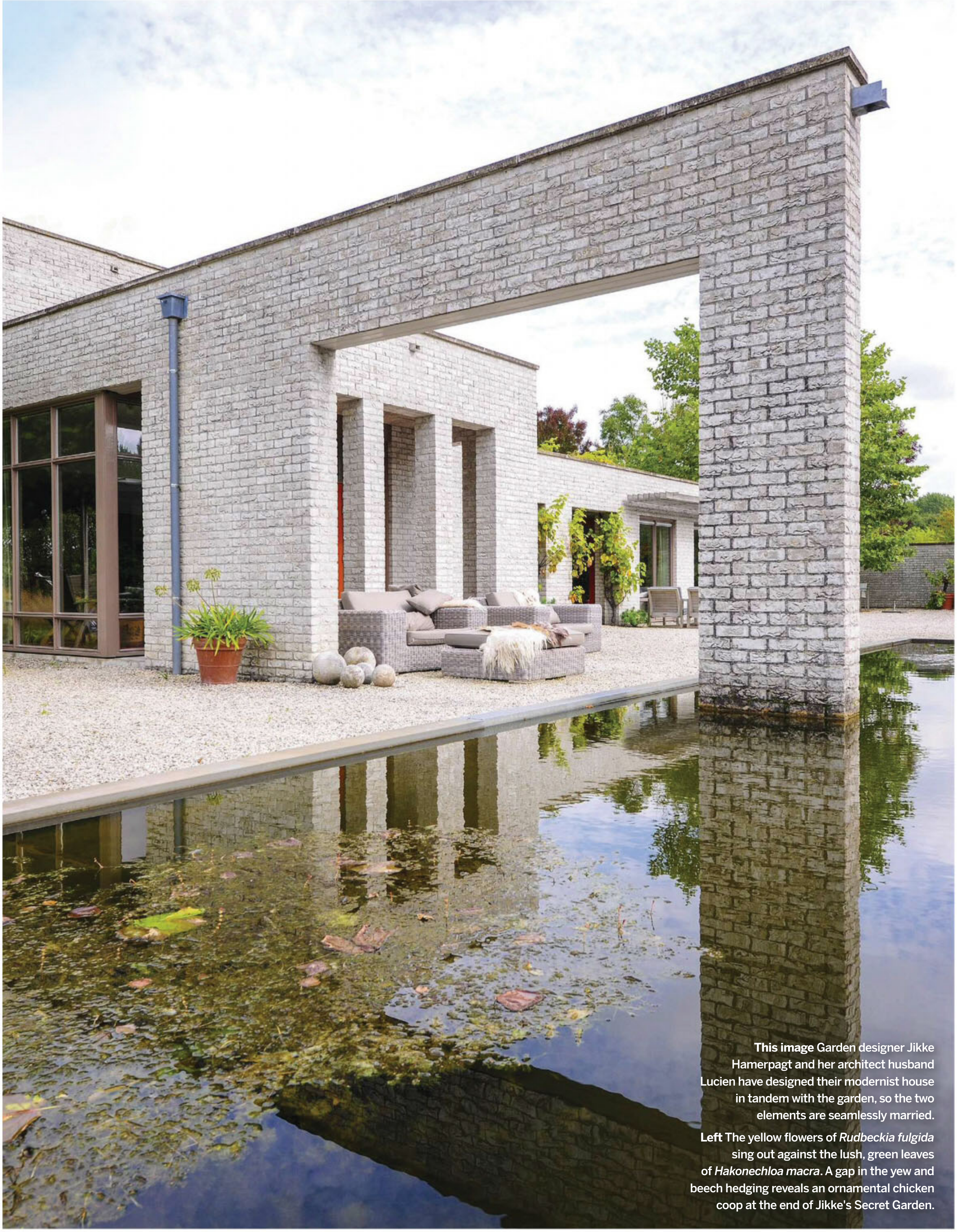
From her modernist house, designed by her husband Lucien, you might suspect Jikke Hamerpagt's garden to be a sparsely planted monochrome affair, but this collection of garden rooms offers a surprisingly colourful mix

WORDS TIM RICHARDSON PHOTOGRAPHS SIETSKE DE VRIES



In brief

Name Locus Flevum.
What Garden designer and architect's garden, made up of compartments.
Where Lelystad, the Netherlands.
Size Half an acre.
Climate Mild and wet.
Soil Rich and free-draining.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.



This image Garden designer Jikke Hamerpagt and her architect husband Lucien have designed their modernist house in tandem with the garden, so the two elements are seamlessly married.

Left The yellow flowers of *Rudbeckia fulgida* sing out against the lush, green leaves of *Hakonechloa macra*. A gap in the yew and beech hedging reveals an ornamental chicken coop at the end of Jikke's Secret Garden.

The key moment of my tour of Jikke Hamerpagt's garden Locus Flevum comes when we reach the heart of its main axis, a hedged passage covered by a wooden pergola that leads from the modernist house to a rustic orchard. The garden has been laid out in rigorously geometric style worthy of (yes, it's a cliché, but it's true) abstract artist Piet Mondrian. Why, then, is one side of the passage made of yew and the other made of beech, with the latter considerably taller?

"In my designs there is always a lot of asymmetry," says Jikke. "I just think that makes it more exciting. If all you do is copy and paste the same materials, it will be boring and unimaginative." This is perhaps the key to Jikke's success as a designer: she obeys the rules most of the time – but not all of the time. It may be because she is self-taught.

"I wasn't motivated at school, and when I left I did social work with young children," Jikke recounts. She taught herself garden design from books, and was most influenced by artist Ton ter Linden's celebrated garden at Ruinen in the north of the Netherlands (which alas no longer exists). "I cried when I was there," she says. "It was so shockingly beautiful."

Jikke and her architect husband, Lucien, bought the land on which their house and garden now stands in 1998. Lucien's design for the house is modernist in style but generous towards the garden and its spaces. This is because house and garden were created in tandem and are even maintained as such, in that the yew and hornbeam hedges that provide structure throughout are clipped precisely to the height of the tops of the windows.

The long, formal pool south of the house is the most striking architectural intervention in the garden, but just as effective in its way is a large, gravelled entrance courtyard to the east, which is

This page

Above left Naturalistic planting has been used to enhance rather than obscure the architectural lines of Jikke and Lucien's modernist house (as counselled by, among others, Gertrude Jekyll). The design shows off the affinities between the house and the garden.

Above right Lush planting of wisteria over the pergola, which defines the axis at the heart of the garden, creates a space for quiet reflection.

Right Jikke and Lucien chose this site for their home, partly because of the countryside in which it sits. The agricultural land, visible here beyond the chestnut palings, contrasts with the manicured precision of the architect-designed walls and gravel courtyard.

This page

Left The garden sees a constant play between the contrasting tone of orderly design, such as the pergola and the trio of pots placed along the terrace, and the unfettered appeal of the plantings.

Below right Large borders next to the pool and gravelled terrace, create a soft contrast to the sharp lines of the house. A dead tree (this particular spot has proved a difficult nursery for trees) painted pink, adds a quirky focal point in contrast to the house.

Below left Jikke tidies the plantings on the garden's central axis. Here, as elsewhere in the garden, she has deliberately kept the design lopsided or asymmetrical, to make the planting "more exciting".

sparsely arrayed with little clusters of pots containing dwarf pines and ferns. "For me, the more empty it is, the better," Jikke says.

West of the house is a lawn that boasts another of Jikke's 'little moments' – an ensemble of clipped yew blocks surrounded by an array of grasses including *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Yaku-jima' and *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldschleier'. The contrast between the clipped evergreen and the feathery grasses is typical of Jikke's style. "I search for balance all the time," she says, "not just in the detail but in the large areas as well. Sometimes I like a huge contrast, sometimes a connection."

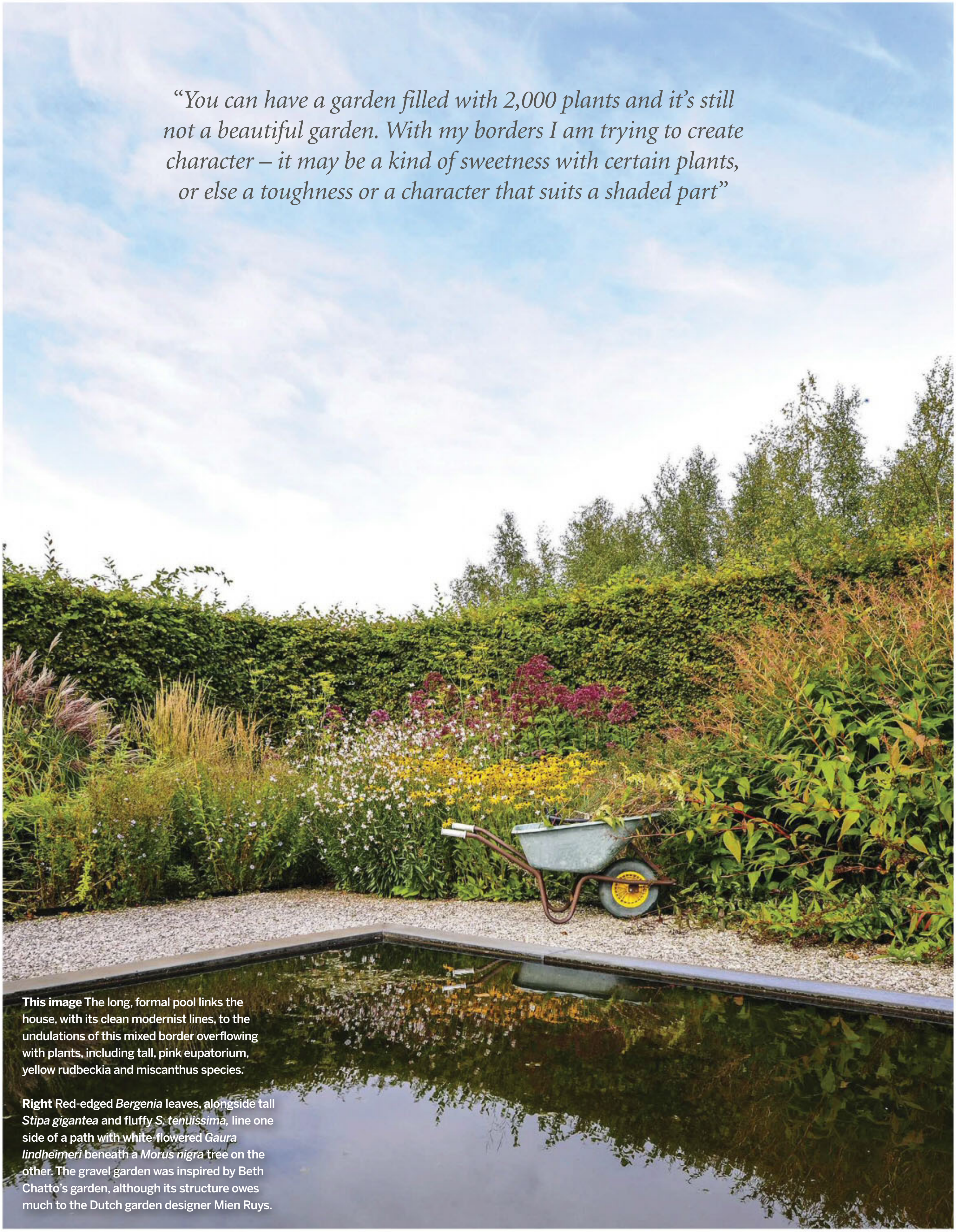
South of the house is a series of garden compartments that lend Locus Flevum (the name is a reference to the Roman name for the area) something of the air of a demonstration garden. This is not a criticism given the massive influence in the Netherlands of the Dutch designer Mien Ruys (1904-99) and her experimental garden in Dedemsvaart – still in excellent condition and open to the public.

There is a big border near the pergola that features most of the surging stars of the New Perennial style – *Veronicastrum*, *Eupatorium*, *Thalictrum*, *Persicaria* – but perhaps more arresting is a gravel garden, which Jikke says was inspired by Beth Chatto's in Essex. Unlike the amorphous ground plan of Chatto's garden, Jikke has deployed rectangular planting beds reminiscent of the 'order beds' in a botanic garden, here filled with verbascum, santolina, *Stipa gigantea*, fennel, knautia, shrub roses, figs, yuccas, cotinus, alliums, buddleia, nepeta and euphorbia.

Roses are a constant theme in this garden, and Jikke has used white *Rosa* Guirlande Rose (= 'Velwichba') on the eastern perimeter of the garden, where it devolves into fields. "I think it's

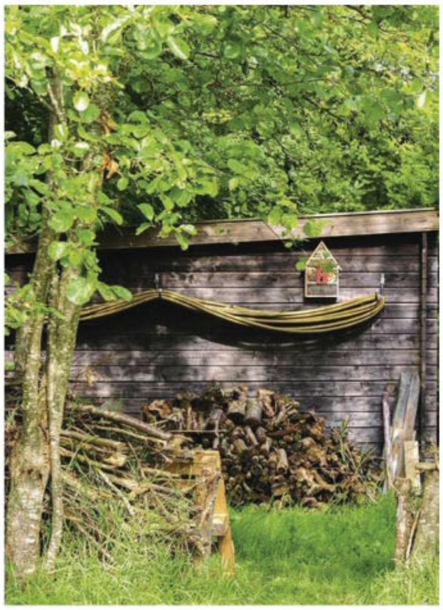
To continue turn to page 68 ▷

> *"You can have a garden filled with 2,000 plants and it's still not a beautiful garden. With my borders I am trying to create character – it may be a kind of sweetness with certain plants, or else a toughness or a character that suits a shaded part"*



This image The long, formal pool links the house, with its clean modernist lines, to the undulations of this mixed border overflowing with plants, including tall, pink eupatorium, yellow rudbeckia and miscanthus species.

Right Red-edged *Bergenia* leaves, alongside tall *Stipa gigantea* and fluffy *S. tenuissima,* line one side of a path with white-flowered *Gaura lindheimeri* beneath a *Morus nigra* tree on the other. The gravel garden was inspired by Beth Chatto's garden, although its structure owes much to the Dutch garden designer Mien Ruys.



This image Hellebores, epimediums, hostas and a *Rodgersia podophylla* decorously jostle for space along the woodland walk.

Right The rustic sheds in the orchard are in stark contrast to the modernist house.

▷ one of the best roses of all – especially in a small garden," she says. "This one will bloom even into the winter." Jikke likes the roses as much for their hips as their flowers.

A white, Butterfly Garden south of here incorporates alliums, veronicastrum, epilobium, malva and *Crambe cordifolia* – but not many rarities. "I'm not always searching for special plants. I want a good garden," Jikke explains. "You can have a garden filled with 2,000 plants and it's still not a beautiful garden. With my borders I am trying to create character – it may be a kind of sweetness with certain plants, or else a toughness or a character that suits a shaded part."

The farther reaches of this small garden comprise a woodland to the west, a small orchard and an L-shaped pool with hardwood deck surrounded by a plantation of alders, willows, birch, ash, sambucus, crataegus and hundreds of bulrushes. The pool is entirely natural and the deck is under water for most of the winter. The path through the massed bulrushes, with birds singing all around in the trees, creates yet another distinct atmosphere in this small garden of intense episodes. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Groene Velden 18, 8211 BA Lelystad, the Netherlands.

Tel +31 320 223 008.

Website locusflevum.nl

Open May to September, by appointment only. Admission €5.

GARDEN PLAN

1 House
2 Gravel courtyard
3 Formal pool
4 Orangerie
5 Gravel Garden
6 Butterfly Garden
7 Natural pool
8 Decked terrace with boardwalk
9 Secret Garden
10 Pergola
11 Shade Garden
12 Orchard
13 Woodland walk
14 Perennial borders
15 Terrace with pink tree
16 Lawn
17 Ornamental grasses

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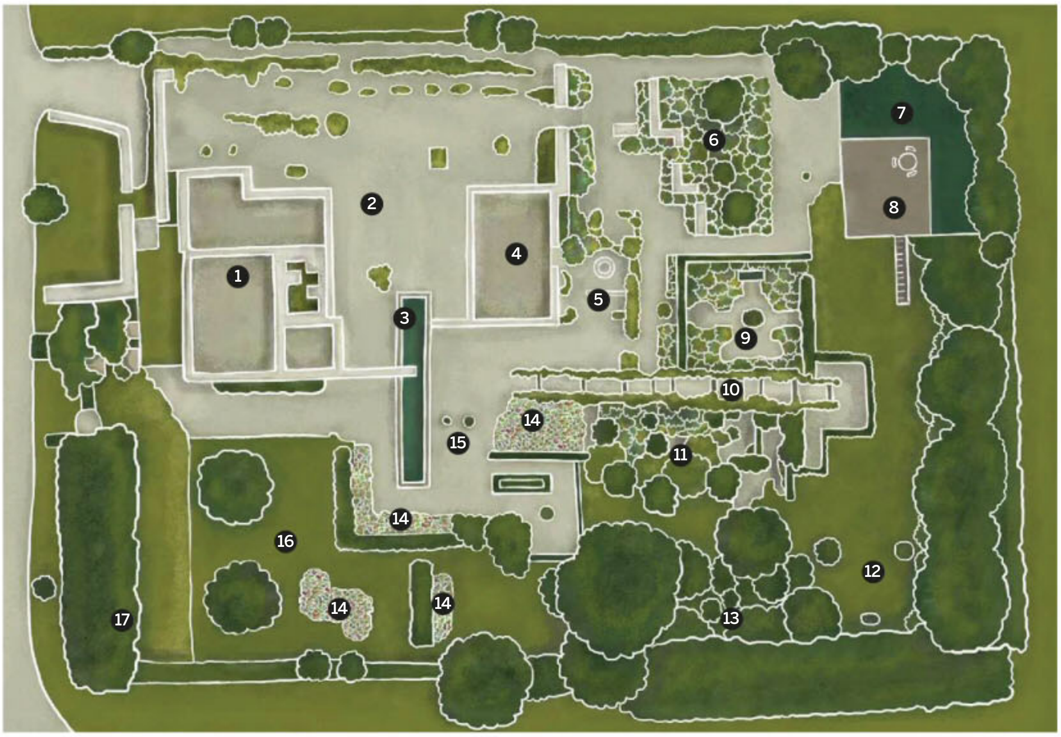

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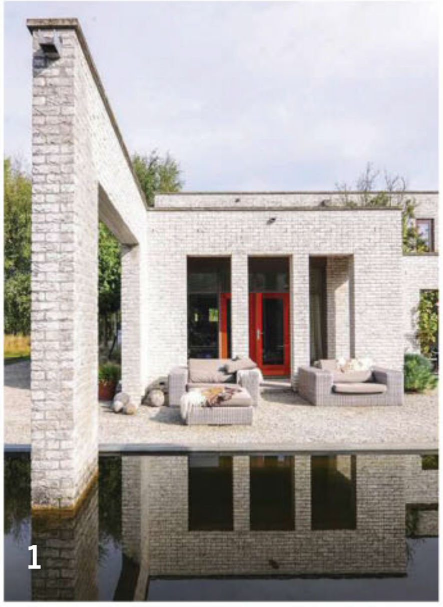
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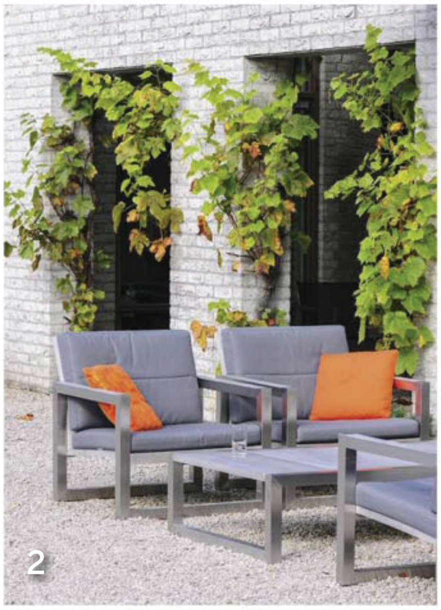
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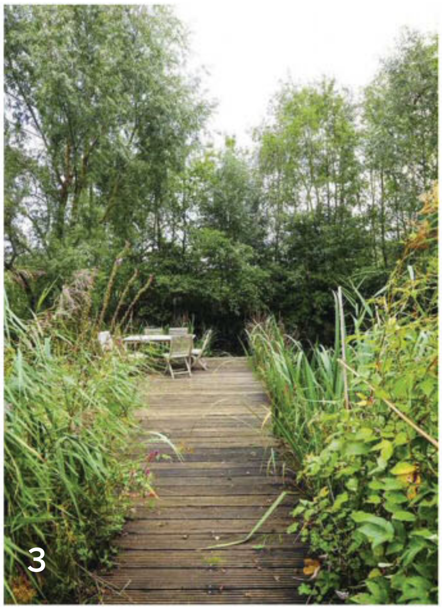
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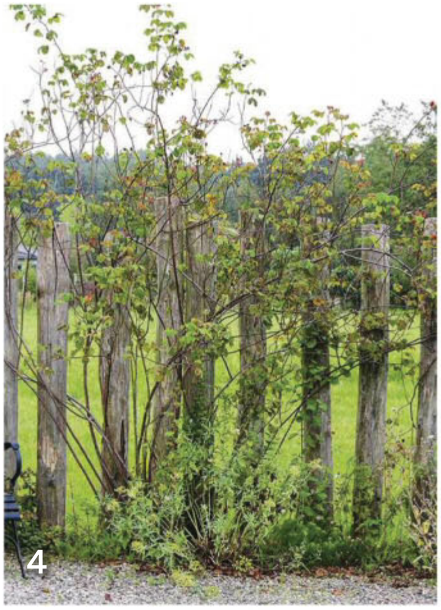
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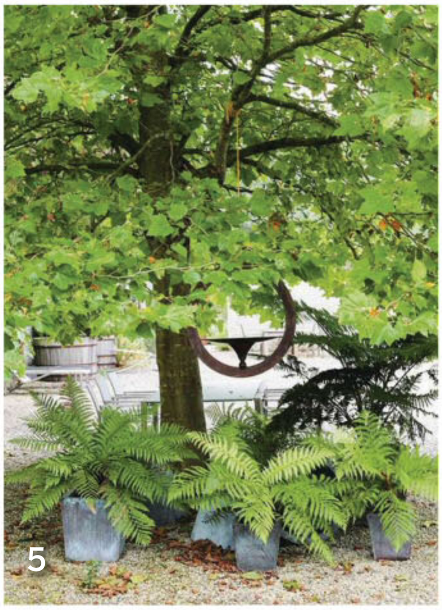
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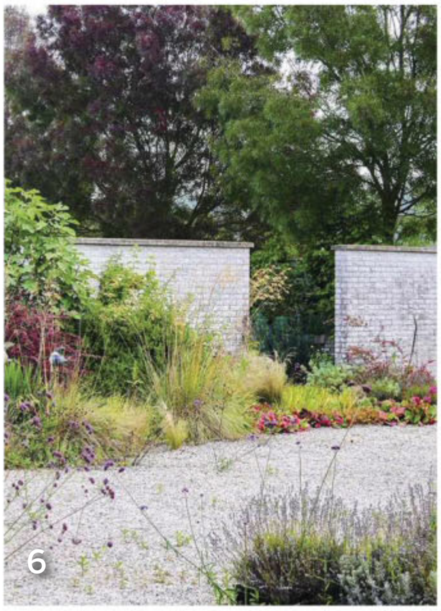
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Design lessons to learn from Locus Flevum

Some clever ideas to take away from Jikke's garden

1 It is always worth making a terrace that is much more generously sized than you may feel you need. A feeling of expansiveness creates a luxurious and relaxing atmosphere.

2 Climbers, such as this grapevine (*Vitis vinifera*), are often best used in moderation so they can emphasise the characteristics of the architecture as opposed to simply smothering it.

3 By varying the materials you use for hard landscaping you can create moments of dramatic contrast, even in a small garden. Here the hardwood decking used around the pool is in contrast to the paler materials used in adjacent parts of the garden creating a different feel.

4 Fencing is sometimes an unconsidered element in the design of even good gardens. In Jikke's garden the chestnut staking, also used by local farmers, is deployed to subtle effect.

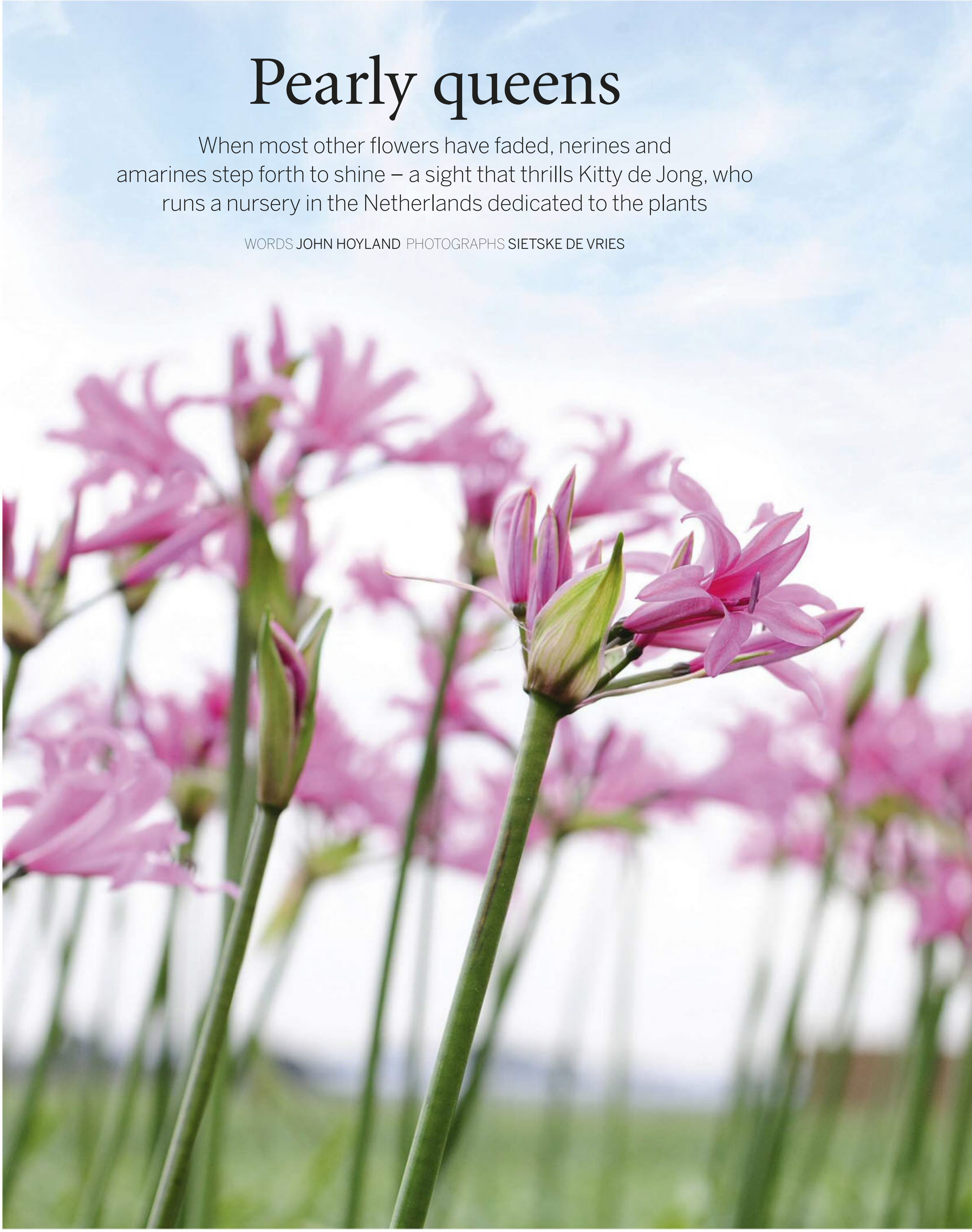
5 Pots used in clusters with identical plantings can strike an effective note in an architectural courtyard or otherwise formal setting.

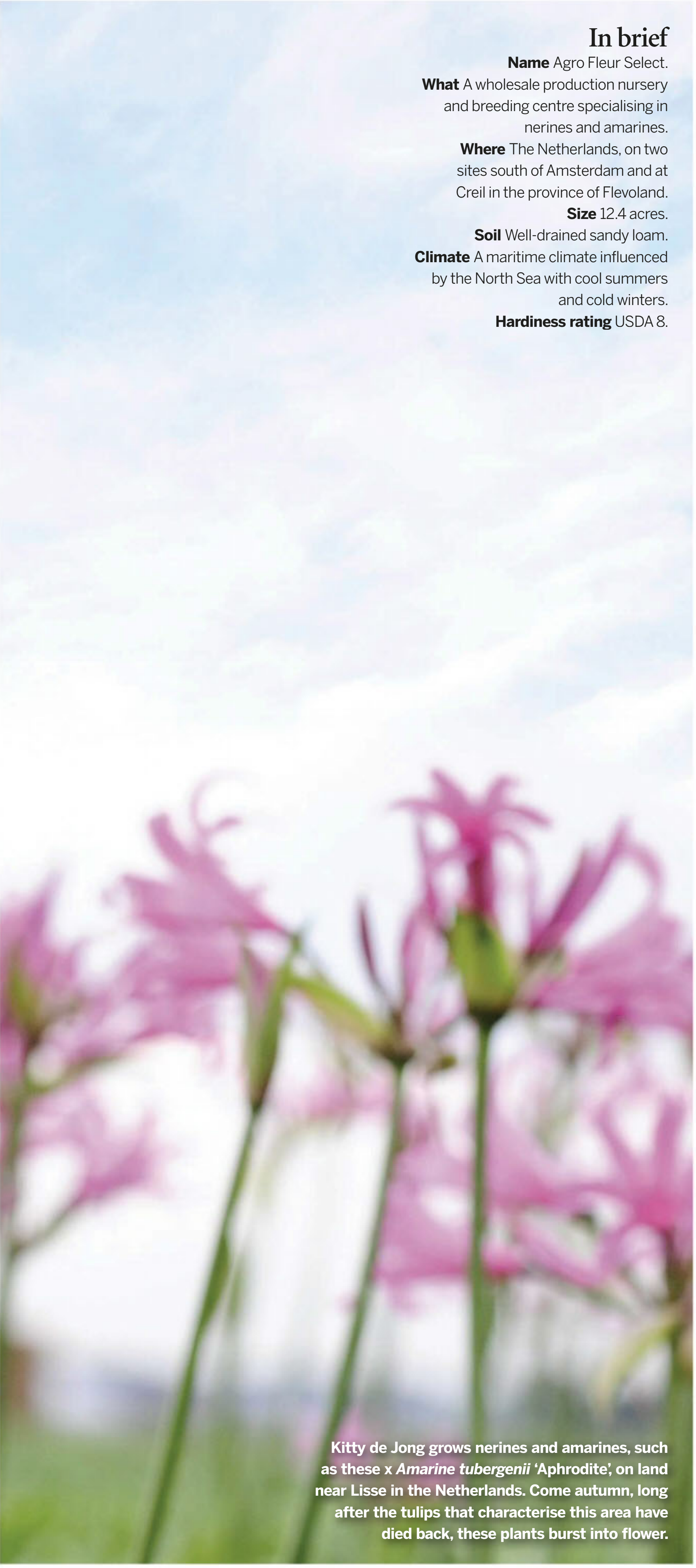
6 Consider creating simple gaps in walls or hedges rather than doorways or gates – a gap creates a view through, not a barrier, and seems to beckon the visitor on.

Pearly queens

When most other flowers have faded, nerines and amarines step forth to shine – a sight that thrills Kitty de Jong, who runs a nursery in the Netherlands dedicated to the plants

WORDS **JOHN HOYLAND** PHOTOGRAPHS **SIETSKE DE VRIES**





In brief

Name Agro Fleur Select.

What A wholesale production nursery and breeding centre specialising in nerines and amarines.

Where The Netherlands, on two sites south of Amsterdam and at Creil in the province of Flevoland.

Size 12.4 acres.

Soil Well-drained sandy loam.

Climate A maritime climate influenced by the North Sea with cool summers and cold winters.

Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Kitty de Jong grows nerines and amarines, such as these x *Amarine tubergenii* 'Aphrodite', on land near Lisse in the Netherlands. Come autumn, long after the tulips that characterise this area have died back, these plants burst into flower.

John Hoyland is a plantsman and garden writer who has gardens in both southeast England and southwest France.

We are all familiar with images of the multicoloured bands of flowers that paint the Dutch landscape in spring. The area around the country's famous bulb garden at Keukenhof, in particular, is a patchwork of small nurseries, separated by narrow canals, that grow tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and alliums. By the end of the summer, the bulb fields are bare save for the occasional explosion of candy-floss pink and sparkling white from the fields of nerines. Several of these fields are tended by Kitty de Jong, whose passion for the genus has earned her locally the epithet 'Queen of the Nerines'.

Nerines are South African bulbs whose flowers sparkle in the dull days of autumn, their pinks and reds a startling and restorative sight. "They are sprinkled with gold dust," says Kitty, who explains that this luminosity is created by cells on the surface of the petals that capture and concentrate light to create a glittery surface, which shimmers in the weak autumnal sunshine.

Kitty inherited her passion for the genus from her father, Kees, who established a cut-flower nursery near Leiden 50 years ago. He started breeding new cultivars and was attracted to nerines because they are at their best when few other plants are in flower.

Kees also began experimenting with amarines – a hybrid that has larger flowers and greener leaves created by fertilising the stigma of *Amaryllis belladonna* with pollen from a nerine. Selecting a new hybrid is a long process. Thousands of seeds are sown and the plants grown for three to four years before a flower is formed. If the flower is sufficiently interesting, it is grown on for several years to assess its qualities. Producing enough bulbs to sell to gardeners is, even with modern techniques, equally laborious.

After studying horticulture at university, Kitty joined her father, but six years ago the land their nursery stood on was earmarked

▷ for housing development. "We could have closed but I decided to carry on," says Kitty. Today, as well as breeding and growing nerines and amarines, she grows peonies, agapanthus and asclepias on sites near Lisse.

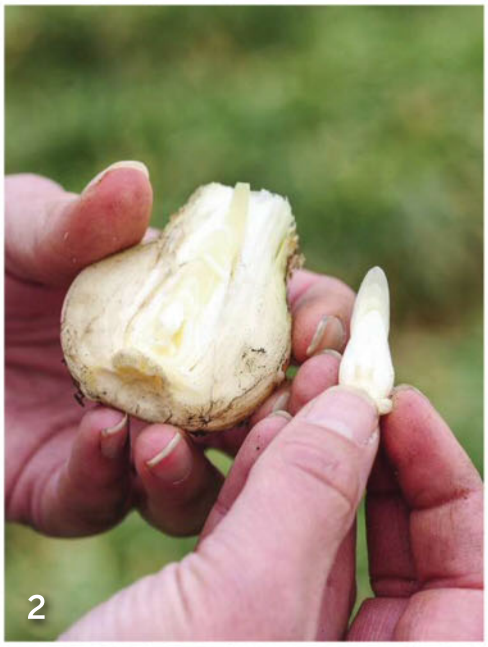
Helped by a team of five, Kitty manages ten acres of nerines and amarines. The new bulbs are planted in the spring and the flowers are sold to the floristry market in the autumn. Then the bulbs are lifted, graded and the largest sold to bulb wholesalers.

As a grower, Kitty is fascinated by the botany of the plant. "If you cut a bulb of *Nerine bowdenii* in half you can see two or even three embryonic flower buds," she says. These develop sequentially, starting with the largest bud, over the forthcoming years. "I think this is the only bulbous plant that has this. It means there are several years' flowers inside a single bulb. This adds to the magic."

Kitty has a vast glasshouse where she breeds and trials new cultivars of amarine and nerine. She's already introduced four cultivars of amarine and is now working on a pure-white one. "I want gardeners to have a wide choice," she says. "And I want gardeners who don't know them to see these brilliant, happy stars brightening the garden in the autumn." ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Agro Fleur Select is not open to the public but more information can be found at **agrofleurselect.nl**. Suppliers include Hayloft (hayloft-plants.co.uk), Hoyland Plant Centre (somethingforthegarden.co.uk), Jacques Amand (jacquesamandintl.com) and Crocus (crocus.co.uk).



1 Breeding a new nerine takes patience and a keen eye. Kitty regularly assesses potential new cultivars.

2 Like Russian dolls, *Nerine bowdennii* bulbs contain embryonic flower buds within them.

3 Bulbs are lifted after flowering, then cleaned and graded. The largest are sold to bulb wholesalers.

Right Nerines and amarines, including *Nerine bowdenii* 'Zalm', enjoy the well-drained soil of Kitty's nursery. The fields produce a double crop: flowers for florists and bulbs for gardeners.

Cultivation

***Nerine bowdenii* and amarines are hardy in sunny situations in well-drained soil.** To flower well the bulbs need to be baked during the summer, so avoid planting them where they will be overshadowed by other plants. Plant the bulbs just below the surface of the soil in large clumps. In cold areas mulch them after they have finished flowering to give extra protection during wet and cold winters.

During the first year after planting, nerines can be shy to flower. Be patient: as soon as they have settled in they should produce lots of flowers. The bulbs hate being disturbed, so once you have planted them avoid moving the bulbs until they are so congested that they stop flowering.

Nerines and amarines love pots and, if you live in a cold and wet region, this is the best way to grow them. Use a loam-based compost with about 20 per cent horticultural grit and plant the bulbs with their noses peeking above the surface of the soil. Water lots when the plant starts into growth but keep dry when finished flowering and store away from frosts. Bulbs flower best crowded tightly together, so don't be too eager to split the bulbs – once every four or five years is sufficient.

12 of Kitty’s favourite nerines and amarines

1 x *Amarine tubergenii* ‘Aphrodite’ (Belladiva Series)
Each of the stems can produce up to ten rose-pink flowers between August and October. The foliage is semi-evergreen and able to withstand up to -5°C of frost. 50cm. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

2 *Nerine* ‘Elegance’
A cross between *Nerine bowdenii* and the less hardy *N. sarniensis*. The dark-pink flowers have slightly crimped petals and a pearly sheen. Flowers from August up until October. 60cm. RHS H4. USDA 8b-9a.

3 *N. bowdenii* ‘Zalm’
The name translates into English as ‘salmon’ and the flowers are indeed the colour of poached wild salmon. It lasts for days in bouquets, making it a popular cultivar with florists. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

4 *N. elegance* ‘Xandra’
Another offspring of *N. bowdenii* and *N. sarniensis*, the mid-pink flowers have a paler central rib. This is a new hybrid that although not currently available will be in the near future. 60cm. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

5 *N. bowdenii* ‘Vesta K’
A popular cultivar in the cut flower industry, the flowers are a soft-pink colour with slightly twisting petals. The flowers are about 20cm wide. 60cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

6 *N. bowdenii* ‘Lipstick’
The pale-pink petals with a darker tip give the flower a two-tone look. Kitty thinks it may be the first bicolour cultivar. It flowers on strong stems but is not yet widely available. 40cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

7 x *A. tubergenii* ‘Tomoko’ (Belladiva Series)
A hybrid with rich-magenta flowers that are a far more intense colour than is usual. The dark stems complement the flowers. In Kitty’s trials, it has flowered from August to November. It is not yet widely available. 60-70cm. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

8 x *A. tubergenii* ‘Anastasia’ (Belladiva Series)
One of a range of hybrids bred by Kitty that flowers on her nursery between August and the beginning of November. The leaves grow through the winter and those damaged by hard frosts will regrow. Flowers are dark pink. 70cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

9 x *A. tubergenii* ‘Emanuelle’ (Belladiva Series)
Another offspring of Kitty’s breeding programme, with large, pink flowers on thick, tall stems from the end of August to November. The foliage will tolerate -5°C of frost. 70cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

10 *N. bowdenii* ‘Athena’
There are several cultivars with white flowers but for Kitty this one is by far the best. It is a vigorous plant that reaches its peak in October, and the flowers are a sparkling, clean shade of white. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

11 *N.* ‘Helena’
A floriferous and long-flowering hybrid that will be available to buy in the near future. The salmon-pink flowers are much larger than the species and have a silvery sheen. Kitty considers this to be one of the most beautiful of the nerines she grows. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

12 *N. bowdenii* ‘Isabel’
An early flowering cultivar with deep-magenta flowers, which was bred by Kitty and named after her eldest daughter. It starts flowering at the beginning of August. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

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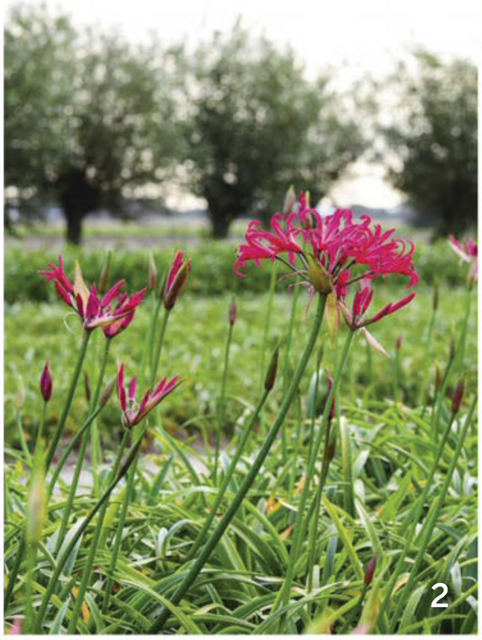
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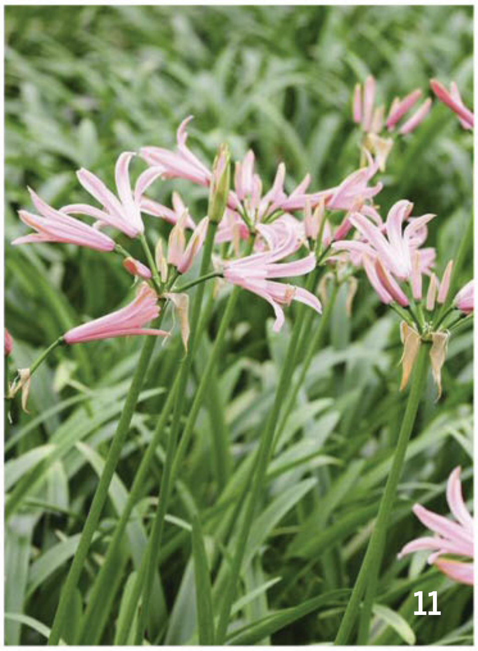
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The human touch

Hugh Dunford Wood's handmade wallpapers, with their plant motifs and floral designs offer a warmth and integrity entirely absent from machined prints

WORDS AMBRA EDWARDS PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Agapanthus and cardoons; honeysuckle and ivy; roses, cornflowers and ferns appear stylised, but clearly recognisable, on every richly papered wall. "Nature is the best designer possible," says Hugh

Hugh Dunford Wood's garden is a little gem, perched high above the golden cliffs and sparkling waters of Lyme Bay in Dorset. A small wood, which he calls Whistler's Wood (the glass engraver Laurence Whistler once lived in the house), protects it from the worst of the wind, so that the roses and hollyhocks just nod gently in the breeze. Sometimes it serves as an outdoor studio, for drying off handprinted fabrics. But its principal benefit, in Hugh's eyes, is that it offers daily inspiration for his beautiful handmade wallpapers. "I don't have to go far to come up with new ideas," he says.

The large magnolia tree planted by Whistler – the subject for a painting every spring – this year found its way into a wallpaper design. A rhythmic foliage pattern is inspired by Whistler's Wood. Agapanthus and cardoons; honeysuckle and ivy; roses, cornflowers and ferns appear stylised, but clearly recognisable, on every richly papered wall. "Nature is the best designer possible," says Hugh. "People always like to bring the outside in."

Hugh has found the most successful forms are trailing and sinuous. "Plants grow upwards towards the light, and in a room you want to be uplifted – but you don't want a straight line going up, that looks plonky," he says. "Back in the 1960s, there were all these bold new wallpapers with zigzags and wiggly lines. But it's not terribly nice – it soon makes you feel a little seasick." So Hugh's patterns often suggest vines and ivies, the curve of a feather, the unfurling of a bud. But there are joyously playful patterns too – frolicking hares, a Rousseau-esque jungle scene, a jolly farrago of vintage footware. For his latest design, he has been sketching the long, twining tails of dormice. And living in Lyme Regis, as he does, a pattern of ammonites could scarcely be avoided…

Hugh began making wallpaper for his own use in the 1970s, when it was deeply out of fashion. He had learned block printing from his mentor, artist Peggy Angus, who used linocuts to produce tiles for the Festival of Britain in 1951 (and numerous other post-war projects including Gatwick Airport). "Wallpaper was such a no-no then: people used to shade their eyes when they came into my home, exclaiming there was too much pattern," says Hugh. "But pattern should be like background music – offering the stimulation of different textures, without fighting what's in front of it."

Hugh also works with lino blocks, printing on to 10m rolls of lining paper that he has previously painted (using household emulsion, which he colours himself). He brushes the paint on to the lino block in a second colour and presses it on to the paper with a four-inch handheld roller. Some of the larger blocks are too big for this process, in which case he leaps on to the table and presses them down with his feet. The pressing is repeated, stamp by stamp, so each one is subtly different, with small imperfections and gradations in tone. It is this that gives the papers a timeless quality that sits so well with old furniture – there's a warm and settled feel about them, rather than crisply new. "You can see the maker's hand in them," says Hugh. "And that's really important to me. It reflects humanity back to humans." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Each batch of Dunford Wood Wallpapers is made to commission in a choice of any two colours and costs £200 per 10m roll. All can be ordered via Hugh's website. Hugh also offers weekend courses in wallpaper design at his Dorset studio twice a year. The next available course begins on 17 March 2017 – see full details on the website. Studio visits are welcome by arrangement.

Website dunfordwood.com

Studio

Advertisement

Jacksons Fencing

news, topical treats and more...

Let’s hear it for Gorgeous GATES

Above: one of the beautiful small garden gates we made especially for the Feel Good Front Gardens at the RHS Hampton Court show this summer

Gates are there for a very good reason - simply put, a gate helps to keep the baddies out, and keep the goodies safely in. With the darker evenings on the way, you might be considering tightening up your security, whether that’s in a rural or urban setting. Wherever your property is, one of the first things will be to look at your perimeter, normally that’s the fencing.

Fencing style and height need consideration and will mainly be dictated by your location and situation. This is a meaty subject and there are masses of choices on our website, so if you are starting from scratch or replacing fencing, you can gain valuable advice and info right there. We even have a handy fence calculator app to help you work out everything you need for your project.

That’s all good, but I’m sure it won’t have escaped you that somewhere in your scheme you are going to need a gate, after all a fence is marvellous and useful thing, but pretty inconvenient without a gate. Whether it’s to allow you to put out the wheelie bins, let you in and out, keep your dog, children or the goats safely in the enclosure, a gate is an absolute necessity. (Please excuse the pic to the right - I found this crazy sign online when researching gates - by animalzrule on Etsy.com - and it reminded me of a photo sent in by Rodney Yates for our photo competition in 2013, I just couldn’t resist putting the two together. Well it made me laugh).

You may not even be in the market for a new fence, if this is so, please ignore the last few paragraphs. However as a fence anorak, can I at least make a suggestion?

Please make sure your gate, or gates are in a good state of repair. It is vital. I have mentioned in these pages before how illogical it is to have the perimeter of your property fenced to keep unwanted visitors out, but then to leave the gate unlocked. We are often told that thieves are opportunists, always on the lookout, they may try a few gates – if your gate stays shut, then they will move on to the next one, it’s as simple as that. Of course, if your gate is a bit rickety, then no amount of locking is really going to stop someone coming through, which is another good reason to make sure that it is a good sturdy gate and not a pushover!

So let’s hear it for gates, they can save you a lot of grief, and if by chance you need a new one, we have a special offer running through September and October - half price delivery on all gates in our Good Fencing Guide range. Good news they all have the Jacksons 25 year Jakcure guarantee too. Full details and T&Cs can be found on your dedicated web page **www.jacksons-fencing.co.uk/lifestyle**

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KEEP GATE CLOSED
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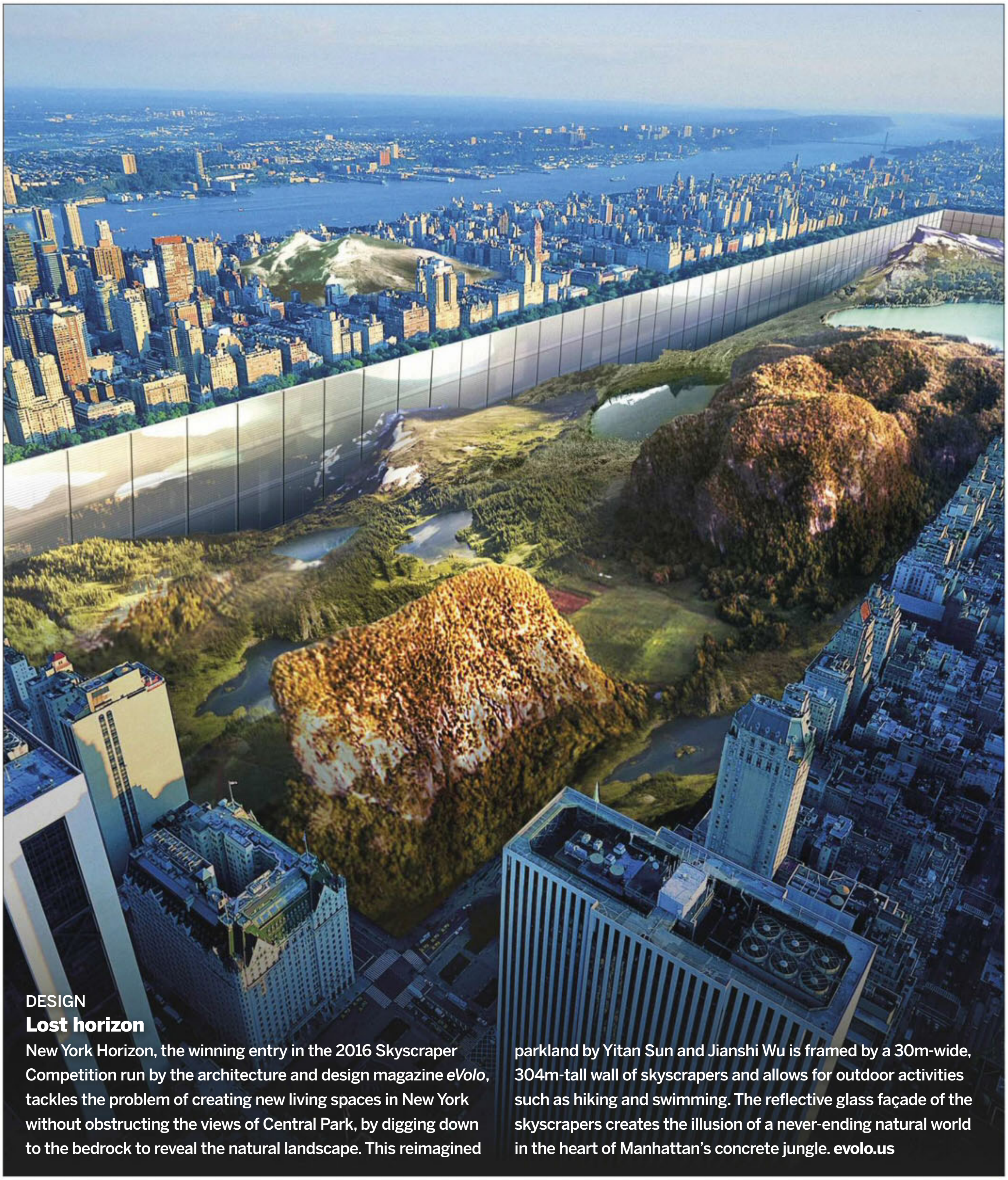
design

Design update, ideas and sourcebook

UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI



DESIGN

Lost horizon

New York Horizon, the winning entry in the 2016 Skyscraper Competition run by the architecture and design magazine *eVolo*, tackles the problem of creating new living spaces in New York without obstructing the views of Central Park, by digging down to the bedrock to reveal the natural landscape. This reimagined parkland by Yitan Sun and Jianshi Wu is framed by a 30m-wide, 304m-tall wall of skyscrapers and allows for outdoor activities such as hiking and swimming. The reflective glass façade of the skyscrapers creates the illusion of a never-ending natural world in the heart of Manhattan's concrete jungle. **evolo.us**

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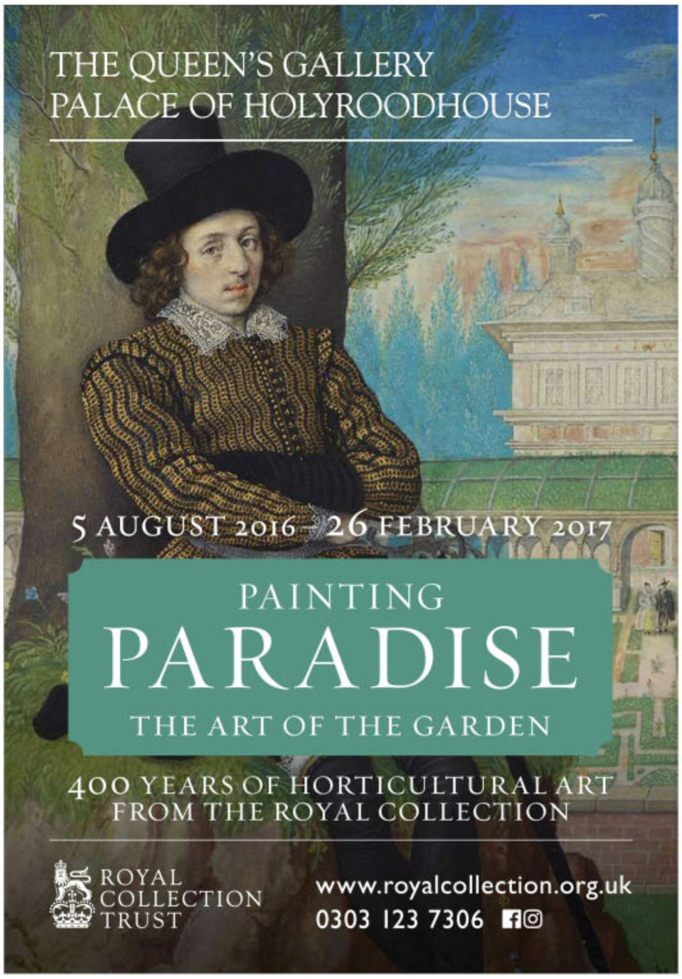

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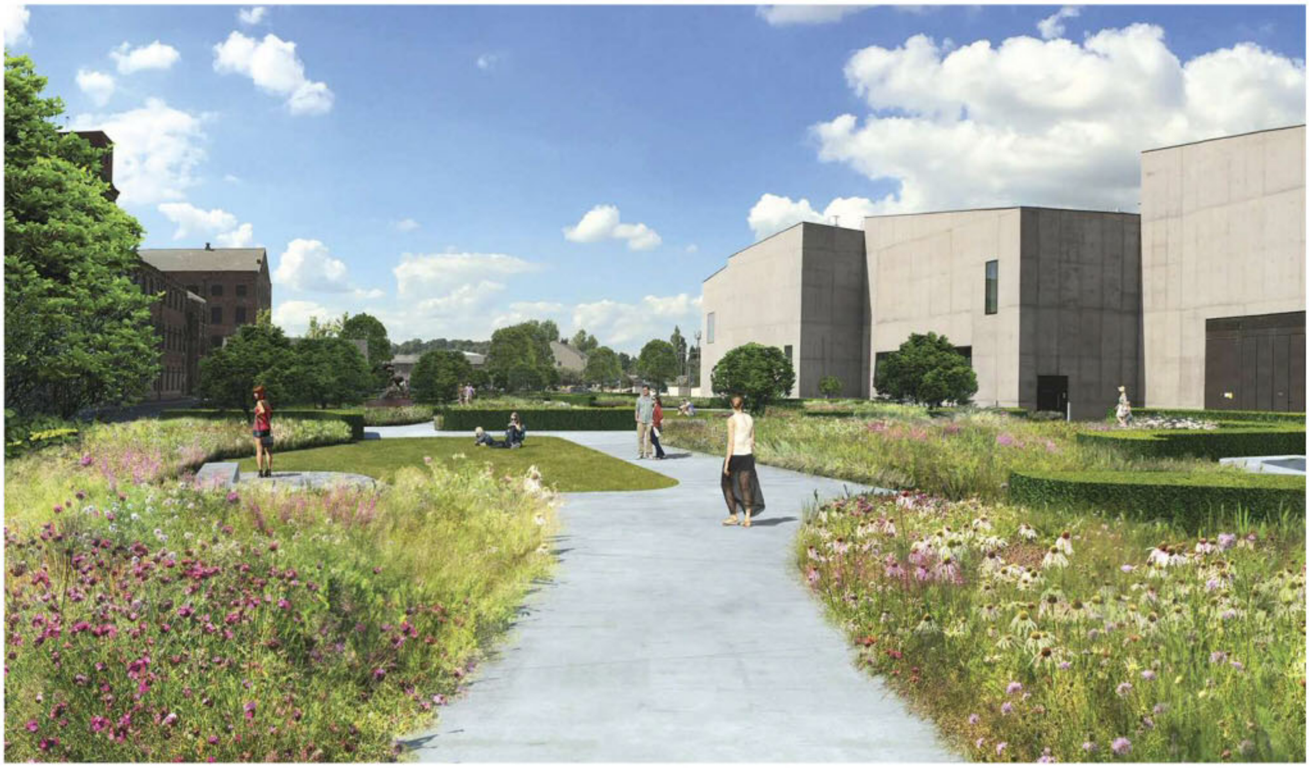
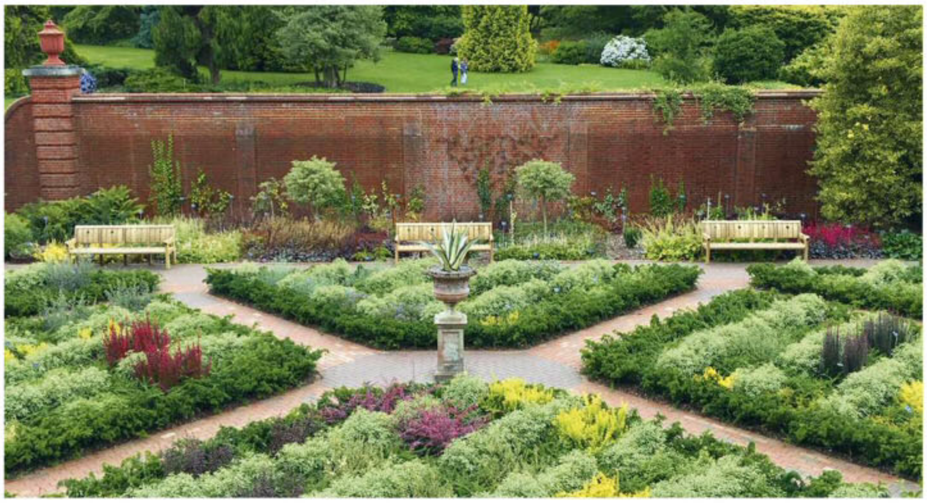


PUBLIC GARDEN

Making connections

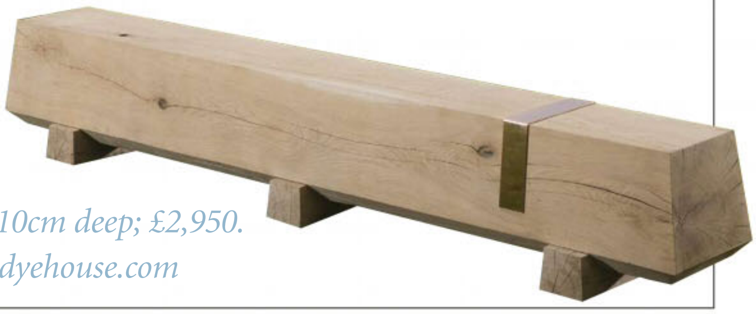
Tom Stuart-Smith has won the Hepworth Wakefield Gallery's competition to design its 6,000-square metre Riverside Garden, set to become one of the UK's largest public gardens to be created in recent years. The design complements the gallery's sculptural form and the industrial heritage of neighbouring buildings, and its naturalistic planting celebrates Barbara Hepworth's connection to the landscape. Large beech and pin oak trees frame the space while a colourful meadow, with a matrix of native purple moor grass, provides the main area of planting. Smaller trees create height and enclosure and lawns provide generous areas for people to gather. **hepworthwakefield.org**



HEDGING

Topiary trial

Alternatives to box (which has been hit recently by blight and box tree moth caterpillars) for low potager-style hedging and topiary are being trialled in the Walled Garden East at RHS Wisley Garden. Planted in a latticework layout, the bands of mainly evergreen species include *Berberis darwinii* 'Compacta', *Pittosporum* and several kinds of the conifer *Podocarpus* that curator Matthew Pottage says are doing particularly well. **rhs.org.uk**



TAKE A SEAT

The beautifully proportioned Dyehouse Fall Bench, cut from a single piece of air-dried oak, has been shortlisted for the Wood Awards 2016. Made to order, the bench measues 2.7m wide, 410cm deep; £2,950. Bespoke sizes and finishes are also available. thedyehouse.com

JONTY WILDE

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

GARDEN ART

Peace and quiet

In her role as artist in residence at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London, designer Jinny Blom has installed an indoor garden as a restorative area for patients, their families and staff. The birchwood planters are imprinted with the meadows of Albrecht Dürer's painting *The Great Piece of Turf* to amplify the sense of greenery. In time, the *Phoenix* and *Howea* palms, cultivars of *Ficus* and *Monstera deliciosa* will grow up into the atrium. **chelwest.nhs.uk**

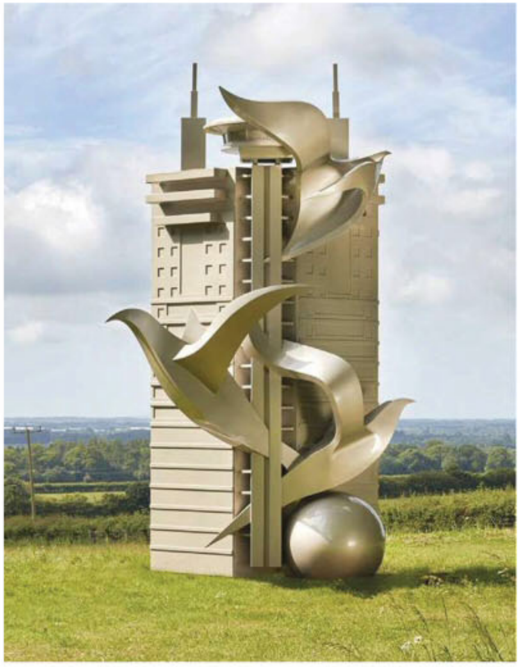
LIGHT THE WAY

This large, lantern-style, outdoor lamp makes an elegant statement, used singly or in a line, in the garden. Made from powder-coated galvanised steel, this glass-sided lamp should be installed by a qualified electrician. Supplied with bulb; 67.5cm high, 30cm wide; £450. rosara.co.uk

EXHIBITION

Sculptured chaos

Sixteen works at CASS Sculpture Foundation, Goodwood, Sussex, form the first major exhibition of newly commissioned outdoor sculpture by contemporary Chinese artists. The theme is A Beautiful Disorder and the works include *Pigeon's House* (right) by Cui Jie, which combines architectural lines with birds in flight; *Movement Field* by Xu Zhen, a maze of pathways that represent historical protest routes around the world, and *Panorama 2* by Wang Wei, a curved mosaic wall that borrows a view from the grounds. Until 6 November. **sculpture.org.uk**



Notebook

- **The Frieze Sculpture Park** returns to Regent's Park as part of Frieze London with works by 20th-century masters Claes Oldenburg, Lynn Chadwick, Sir Eduardo Paolozzi and Jean Dubuffet, alongside pieces by leading contemporary artists Goshka Macula, Conrad Shawcross and Matthew Monahan. 6-9 October, frieze.com
- The tenth annual Kiku, the **Art of the Japanese Garden** exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden conservatory, features hundreds of trained chrysanthemums, the newly opened maple collection, and the arts of bonsai and ikebana. 8-30 October. nybg.org
- Book now for a night-time illuminated exploration of the buildings, plants and landscape of the **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh**. 13 October – 6 November. botaniclights.co.uk
- **Writtle College** in Chelmsford, Essex, has achieved university status. Open days for degree courses in landscape and garden design, landscape architecture and the Diploma in Garden Design are on 27 October and 26 November. Book via writtle.ac.uk
- Many colleges offer courses on garden design, which can serve as tasters for longer design courses, or as an original gift for novice gardeners. **Cotswold Gardening School** at Gossington Hall, Gloucestershire, offers an Introduction to Garden Design day on 29 October. cotswoldgardeningschool.co.uk
- The speakers at this year's **Garden Makers Day at the English Gardening School,** Chelsea Physic Garden, are Arne Maynard, Diarmuid Gavin, and Julian and Isabel Bannerman. £95, 17 November, 10am-3.30pm. Tel 020 7352 4347, englishgardeningschool.co.uk

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Returning to Tenerife for our second exclusive music festival on the island, we will present a series of six concerts featuring the Leonore Piano Trio, flamenco guitarist Juan Martin, and violist and composer Simon Rowland-Jones.

Staying at the 5* Hotel Botanico, surrounded by lush tropical gardens in an unspoilt part of this volcanic island, we shall also enjoy a programme of fascinating excursions. Highlights include the Sitio Litro Orchid Garden, a cable car journey to the peak of Mount Teide and a visit to the primeval cloud forest of the Anaga Mountains. We will also visit historic and picturesque villages along the spectacular north coast, including Garachico with its 17th century convent.

Price from £2,395 per person for seven nights including return flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast, six dinners, six private concerts, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

THE KIRKER MUSIC FESTIVAL AT THE HOTEL TRESANTON

A THREE NIGHT HOLIDAY | 13 MARCH 2017

Join the Sacconi Quartet for a superb holiday in Cornwall with three days of glorious music-making in Olga Polizzi's fabled Hotel Tresanton.

In addition to the wonderful music on offer we will also enjoy a visit to the private garden at Lamorran, located just behind the hotel in St. Mawes and overlooking the sea. The garden was created by the owner after a visit to Lady Walton's garden on the island of Ischia. Superb musicianship and staying in one of England's finest hotels combine to make for a memorable spring break at a time when Cornwall is looking its best.

Price from £1,159 per person for three nights including return transfers from St. Austell station to St. Mawes, accommodation with breakfast, three dinners, three concerts each preceded by a musically illustrated talk, a visit to Lamorran Gardens and the services of the Kirker Tour Lecturer and a Tour Escort.

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SIX NIGHT HOLIDAYS | 24 MAY & 21 JUNE 2017

Tranquil, serene and timeless, the mountains that fringe the crystal waters of Lake Como provide a dramatic backdrop to the countless pristine villas that stretch up the hillsides surrounded by superb gardens.

Our tour is based at the 4* Hotel Terminus, in the lakeside town of Como. We visit idyllic Bellagio, explore the gardens at the Villa Carlotta and the Villa Balbianello and have lunch at the luxurious Villa D'Este. A day is spent at Stresa, the principal town on the shores of Lake Maggiore. We will visit the beautiful Borromean Islands by boat and at Isola Bella will explore a magnificent palace surrounded by terraced gardens.

Price from £1,997 for six nights including return flights, accommodation with breakfast, three dinners, three lunches, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Lecturer.

GARDENS OF THE RIVIERA

FIVE NIGHT HOLIDAYS | 9 APRIL & 1 OCTOBER 2017

There are many great gardens dotted along the Côte d'Azur between St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat and the border with Italy. Along with famous artists, gardeners were drawn to the Riviera by both its climate and its beauty.

Based at the 4* Hôtel Napoléon in Menton, we visit the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild in St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, as famous for its art collection as for the nine beautiful gardens, and the Villa Kerylos, a stylish recreation of a classical villa. In Menton, we visit the Val Rahmeh garden, as well as Lawrence Johnston's garden, Serre de la Madonne and in Monaco we see the principality's collection of succulents at the Jardin Exotique. Across the border in Italy we visit the famous Hanbury garden at La Mortola and Ursula Piacenza's private garden, the Villa Piacenza Boccanegra.

Price from £1,556 for five nights including flights, accommodation with breakfast, one lunch, three dinners, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

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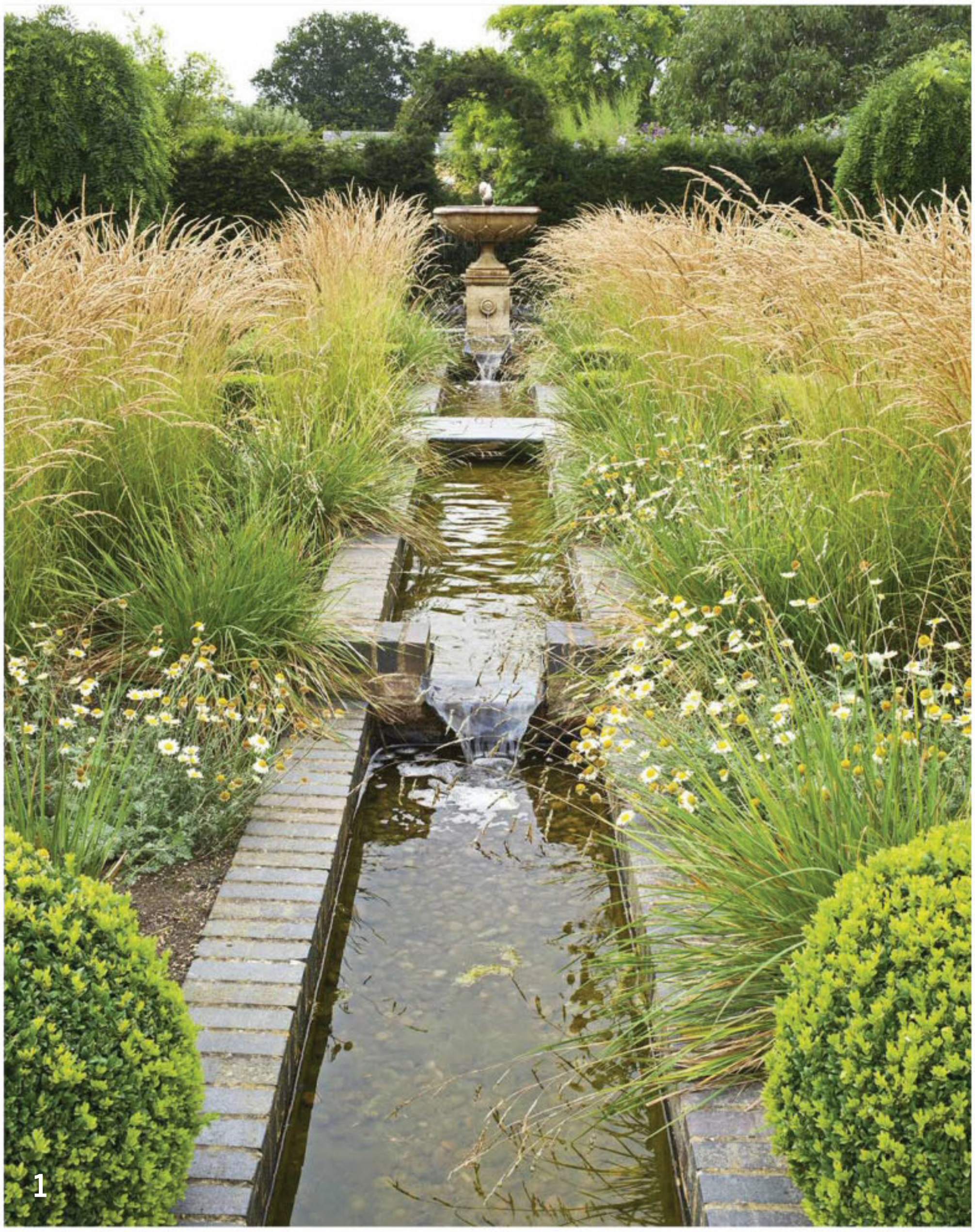


DAV D D XON/GAP PHOTOS

1 Straight up

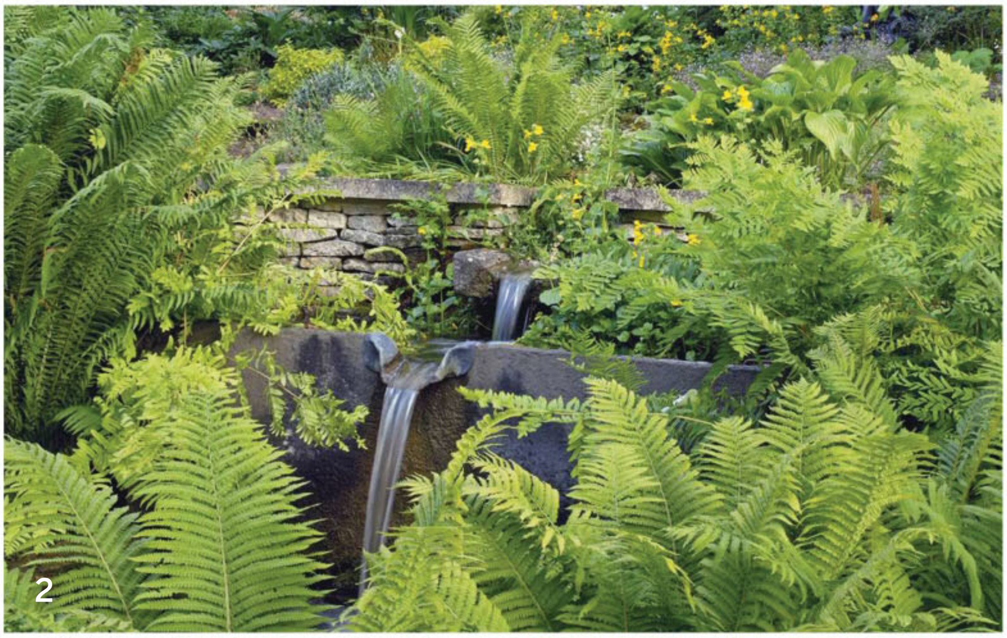
This rill at Merriments Gardens in East Sussex is textbook – straight, with a bit of a step to create a trickling sound. There's topiary downstream and a classic urn as the source. Although it has nothing to do with rills, I particularly like the hedged circle in the background that frames everything rather beautifully.

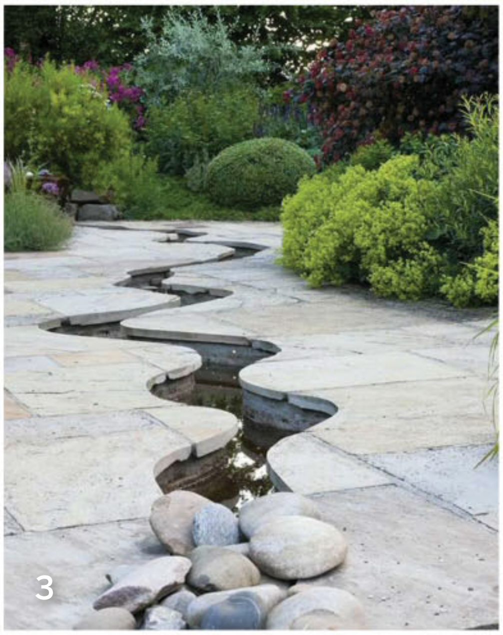
James Alexander-Sinclair is a garden designer, writer, broadcaster and founder of into-gardens.com. He has served on the RHS Council for the past five years.

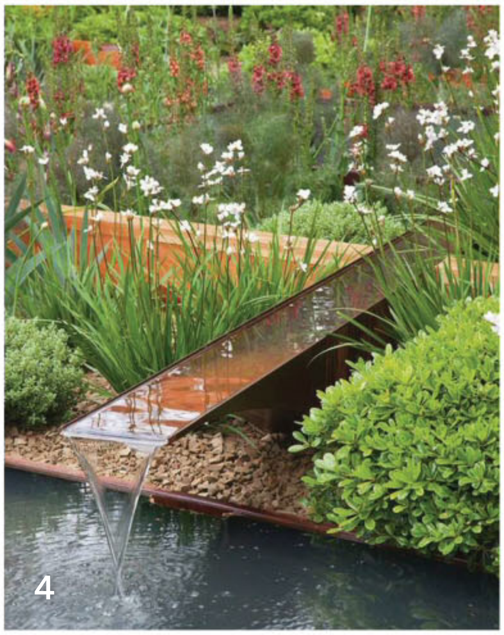
Where there's a rill...

Who doesn't find running water in the garden soothing? This month, James Alexander-Sinclair encourages us to build a rill, the oh-so simple, perennially popular design feature

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR







2 GARDENWORLDIMAGES.COM; 3 CHRISTA BRAND/GAP PHOTOS; 4 JO WHITWORTH/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

2 Eau naturel

I absolutely love this cascading rill designed by Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall at Ozleworth Park in Gloucestershire. The two spouts of falling water are perfectly matched – lead is the best material for spouts such as this as it can be fine-tuned easily. The surrounding ferns complement the whole situation perfectly.

3 Meandering canal

It is not often you see a curvy rill. This was designed by Jens Tippel for a private garden near Hanover in Germany and snakes its way across the terrace, linking to a natural swimming pool. Cutting paving in such a way is quite a feat so congratulations go to the landscapers too.

4 Short and sweet

This was Joe Swift's first– and, to date, only – Chelsea garden, which he designed for Homebase and the Teenage Cancer Trust in 2012. Laminated timber arches framed several views, including this rather elegant metal chute (rills don't have to be very long). He won a gold medal for the garden – and is reluctant to let any of us forget it!

If you were invited by a therapist (or anyone) to sit back, close your eyes and picture the perfect garden then I am willing to bet that somewhere in that visualisation you'll be imagining trickling water. It is almost universal: whether you are in a small cottage on the edge of a Cumbrian fell listening to the water cascade through rocky crevasses; rattling around a vast stately home while the grand fountains play; or in a Devonian farmhouse surrounded by babbling brooks.

You will have guessed by now that my subject this month is the universally popular stream or, to be more precise, the rill. Geologists will tell you that a rill is a channel eroded into a slope by a flow of water and they will also be of the opinion that they are generally a bad idea. However, it is the other kind of rill with which we are concerned here: usually a formal channel used to bring a bit of well-disciplined water into our gardens. There is no official story about the invention of the rill. However, if you were an Assyrian nobleman, a Roman senator or a Moorish warlord then you would know all about them.

As an example, take one of the most iconic gardens in the world – the Palacio de Generalife gardens in Granada, Spain. They were built in the early 14th century but the present gardens were remodelled in the 1950s following a classic Islamic design built around long rills and fountains – this is the model for so many western water gardens. The fresh spring water from the mountains would be diverted via a system of aqueducts and pipes before being delivered into lush, green courtyards around which parrots would fly and cicadas chuckle. For the lucky inhabitants, it would not only provide the sound of running water but also a

▷

5 Twist and turn

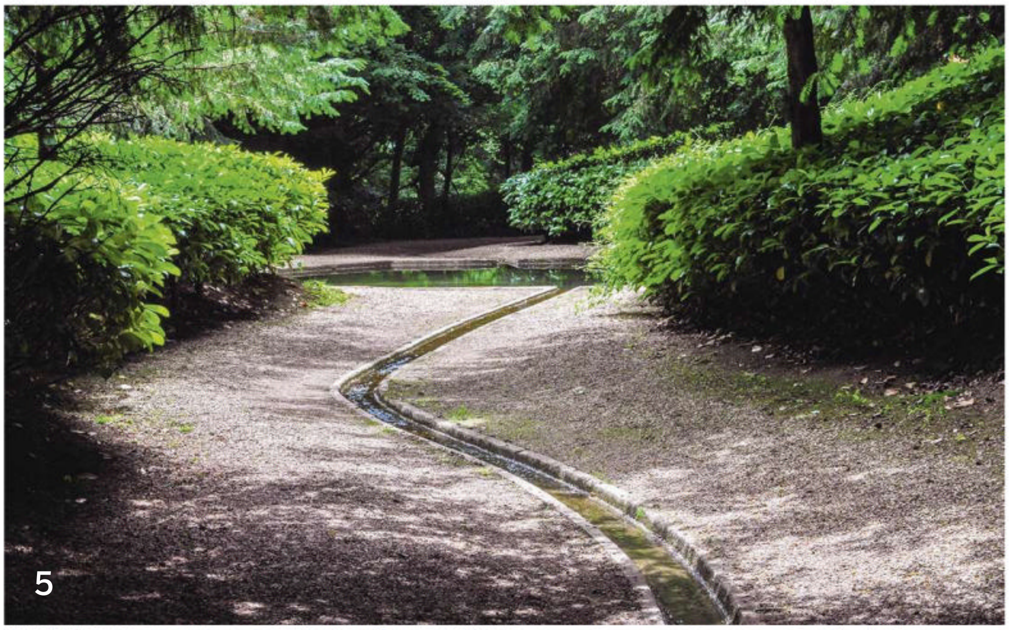
William Kent's masterpiece at Rousham in Oxfordshire is the rill to end all rills. It curves and sweeps down the hill with the elegance of a downhill skier before pausing at a (very bracing) plunge pool before finishing in a fine pond. Mentioning no names, a well-known garden designer (Cleve West) likes to float rubber ducks down this rill whenever he visits.

6 Renaissance style

Not a rill that will work well in Berkshire but perfect in the over-the-top 16th-century Mannerist extravaganza that is the Villa Lante near Viterbo in Italy. The extensive waterworks were designed and built by Tommaso Ghinucci who knew exactly what he was doing. Amazing energy and exuberance.

7 It's behind you

A small but perfectly formed rill in Tom Stuart-Smith's 2006 Chelsea show garden for *The Daily Telegraph*. It was made from Corten steel at the back of a beautiful cantilevered timber bench – just the right height for dangling a languid hand in the cooling waters. Most of this garden ended up going home to Hertfordshire with Tom.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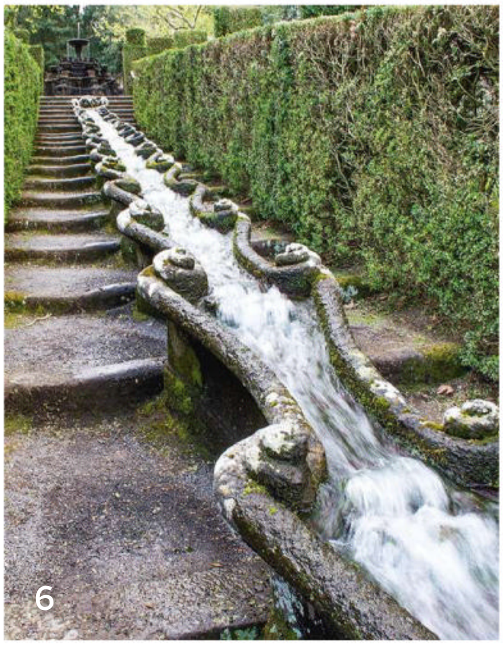
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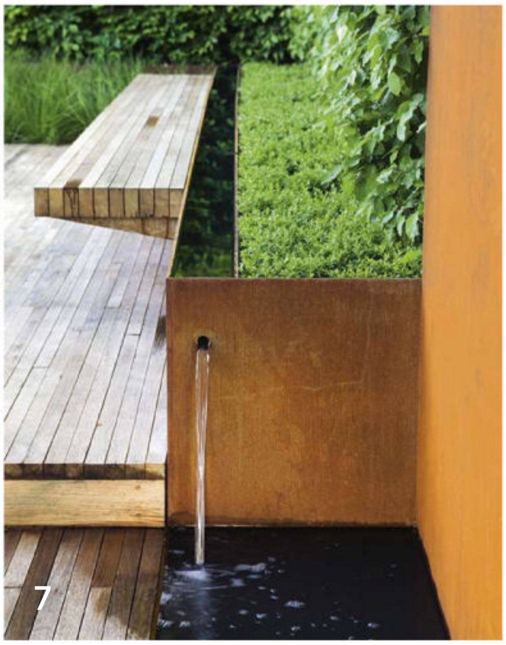
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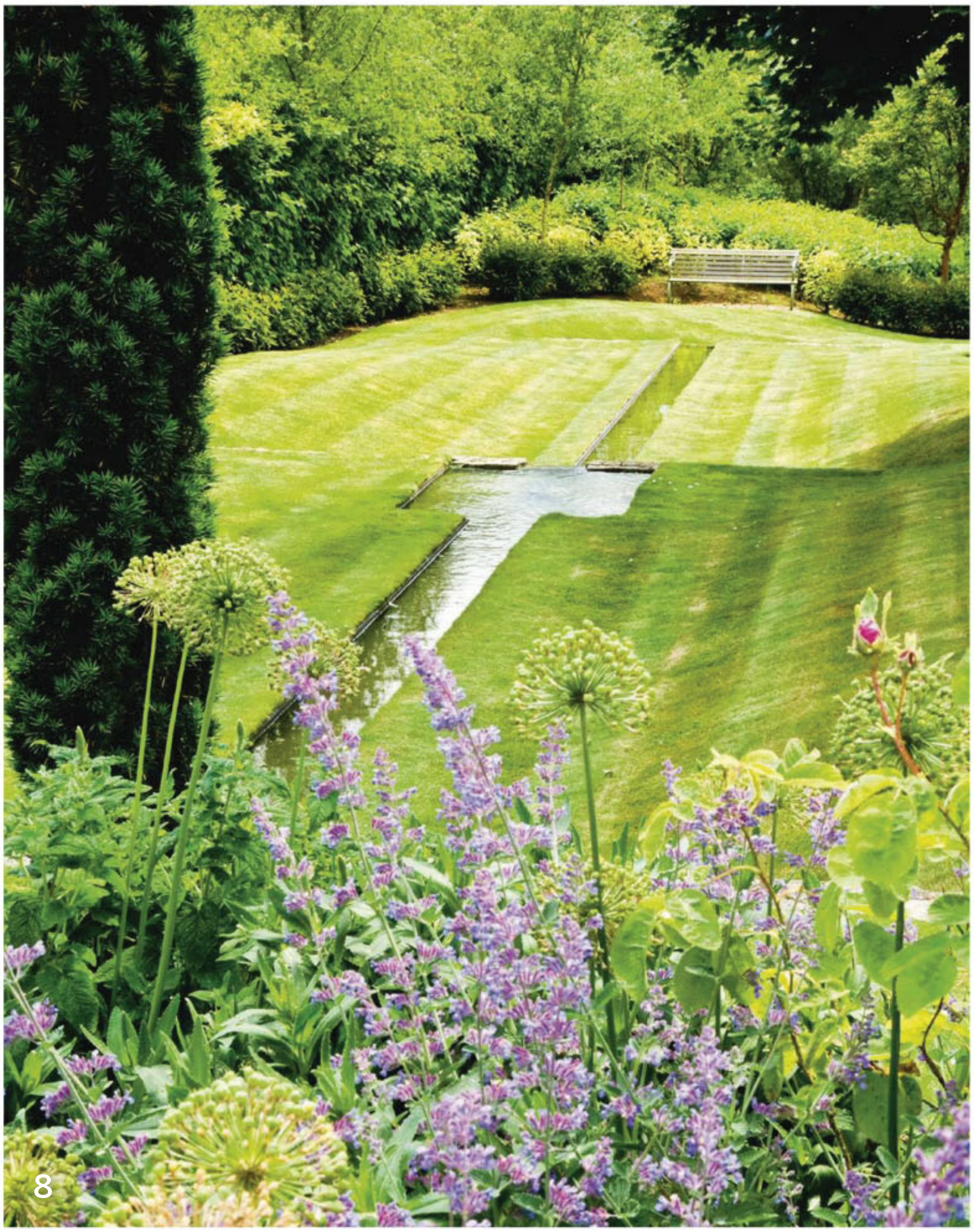
5 SIMON BOURNE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 6 LUCA ANTONIO LORENZELLI/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 7 ANDREA JONES/GARDENEXPOSURES.CO.UK

▷ form of air conditioning as it bubbled around their feet and cooled the heat of the day.

Today, we do not place such reliance on complex systems as we are fortunate enough to have any number of convenient taps, so the rill has evolved from being a bit of essential town planning to being a garden feature. And, judging from the many show gardens I have seen over the years, a very popular garden feature at that. I have seen rills made from all sorts of materials – high rills, wiggly rills, hilly rills, fast rills, slow rills, old rills, planted rills, minimalist rills, kitsch rills, swimming rills, formal rills and relaxed rills. You get the picture. They come in every shape and size and are so simple and easily customisable that they can work in pretty much any style of garden. Rills are usually very shallow so are also safe for children. I designed one once specifically for model boats: the idea was that the clients' visiting grandchildren could put a boat in one end of the rill and the flow of the water would carry the boat swiftly but steadily along until it popped out into a pond. Hours of fun for all the family – and the designer.

Planting is usually superfluous. A rill should be a strong enough design feature to survive without too much planting; otherwise it becomes a stream, which is not the same thing at all. A strategically placed gunnera to cover the source will work well, maybe some flanking borders, and the rill could eventually feed into a planted pond. Aside from that, keep it as simple as possible. The important thing to remember is that water is as awkward as a gnu in glue – it will always find the easiest way through and is unforgiving when it comes to levels. There is little room for error and any rill you build must be perfectly engineered. It is quite straightforward if you are



ANNA STOWE BOTANICA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

8 Grassy edge

Not all rills need to be set in paving, patios and pathways. This is a blissfully simple example that slices through grass with a bench as a focal point at the end. It is important that you like edging lawns as the sides need to be kept perfectly tonsured to retain the slickness.

Water garden specialists

If you need help building the perfect rill try:

- **Martin Kelley at Fairwater Limited**. Martin, who is also the author of *Water Garden Construction* (Packard Publishing, 2015), established Fairwater Limited in West Sussex in 1993, and has extensive experience in the design, construction and maintenance of water gardens. Tel 01903 892228, fairwater.co.uk
- **Nick Roberts at Fountains Direct**. Nick's Surrey company specialises in fountains. Tel 01932 336338, fountains-direct.co.uk

lucky enough to have a constantly running stream (as at Rousham or Shute House) but most people will have to resort to pumps and plumbing. Probably the two most important considerations in any artificially pumped rill are how to prevent it from going green and sludgy, and ensuring the catchment tank is large enough. The tank needs to cater for the volume of water in the rill, water in the pipe, plus enough to cover the pump, plus any lost through evaporation. Lots of maths, biology and physics involved in water – it's usually safest to enlist the help of a specialist.

Whether you have a small, urban garden or a vast, bucolic pile, the rill is an effective way to bring water into your outdoor space. Lie back and be soothed by the sound of it chattering its way along geometric channels. Unbelievably, I have written this piece without succumbing to cheap puns, which is rilly very good indeed. □

Places to visit

If you get the chance to visit **Shute House** near Shaftesbury in Dorset then grab it with both hands and your teeth. The rill there was designed by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe and is one of the best in the world. The water runs over copper waterfalls designed to make different sounds. It is open to groups by appointment. **Tel 01935 814389.**

The **Palacio de Generalife** gardens are part of the Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain. A fascinating garden showing obvious influences from Islamic and Moorish gardens. **alhambra-patronato.es**

Hestercombe Gardens near Taunton in Somerset features long, stone-lined formal rills with circular pools designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. **Tel 01823 413923, hestercombe.com**

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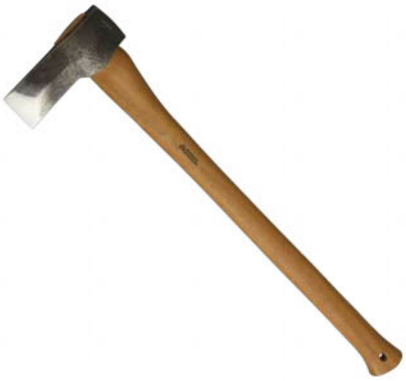
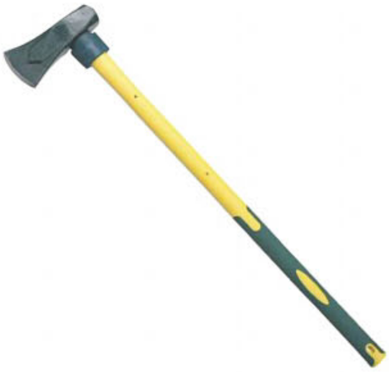
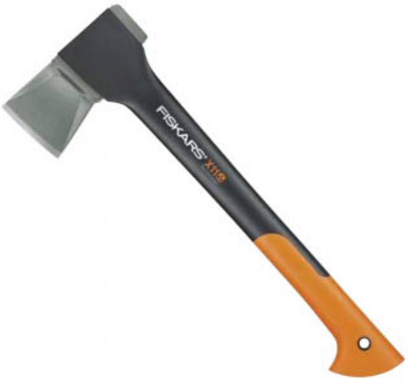


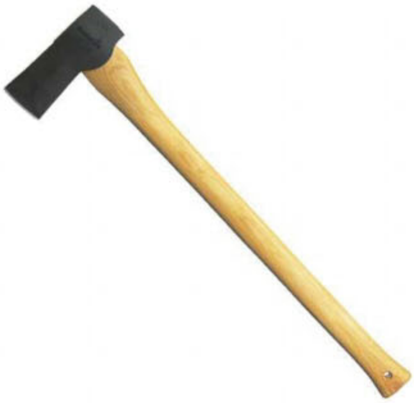
HICKORY HANDLE
SA Wetterlings Splitting Axe, 2.2kg,
£84.95, The Bushcraft Store,
020 8367 3420, thebushcraftstore.co.uk



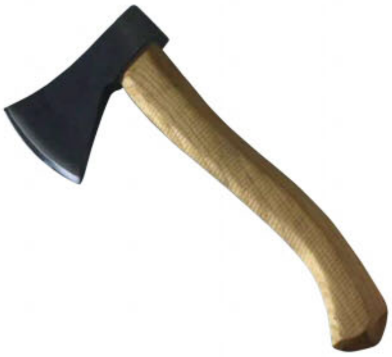
FIBREGLASS SHAFT
Log Splitting Axe, 2.72kg,
£24.99, Bulldog Tools,
0800 783 2202, bulldogtools.co.uk



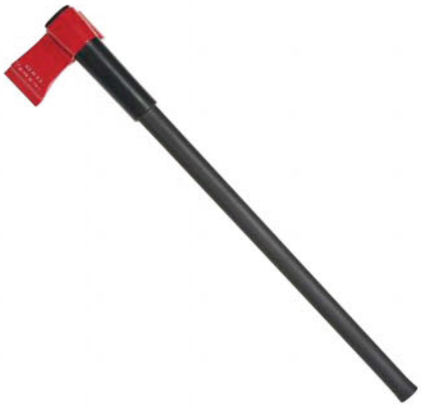
FOR KINDLING
Splitting Axe S X11, 1.1kg,
£44.99, Fiskars,
0121 796 0444, fiskars.com



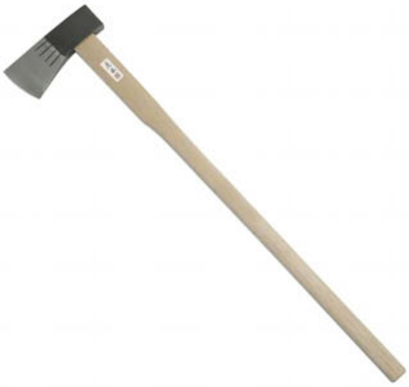
SWEDISH CLASSIC
Splitting Axe KLY RA, 1.5kg,
£78.48, Hultafors,
01484 854488, hultafors.co.uk



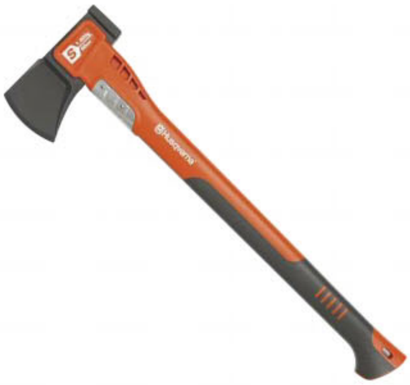
GREAT VALUE
The Robin Wood Axe, 760g,
£39, Robin Wood,
01433 670321, robin-wood.co.uk



LEVER MECHANISM
Leveraxe 1 Composite, 3kg,
€165, Vipukirves Heikki Oy,
+358 (0)50 432 3250, leveraxe.com



JAPANESE DESIGN
Kiwari Axe, 1.3kg,
£109, Niwaki,
0345 474 1041, niwaki.com



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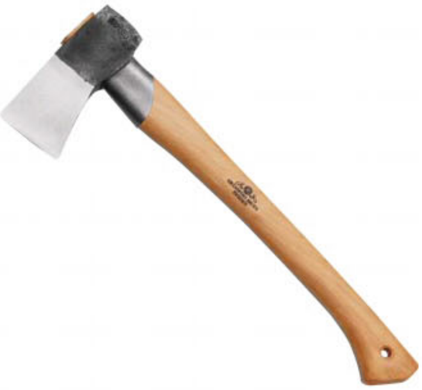
Splitting Axe S1600, 1.6kg,
£64.75, Husqvarna,
0844 243 5263, husqvarna.com



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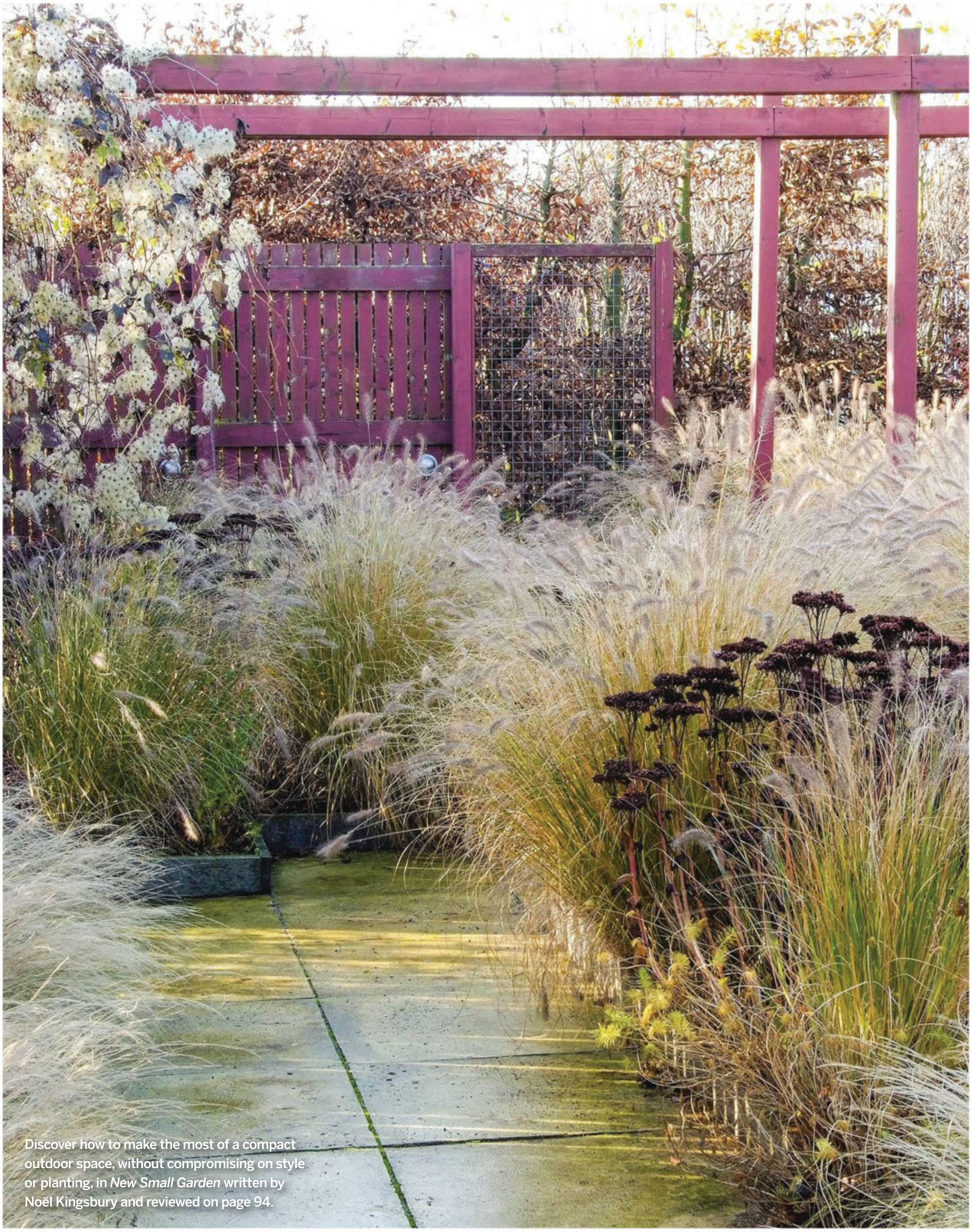
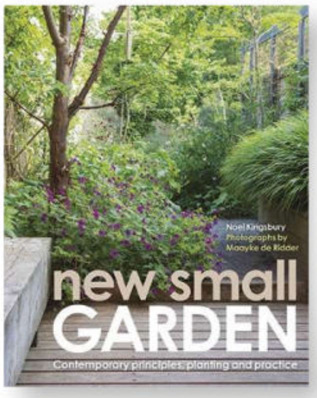


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Discover how to make the most of a compact outdoor space, without compromising on style or planting, in *New Small Garden* written by Noël Kingsbury and reviewed on page 94.

Book reviews



NEW SMALL GARDEN
by Noël Kingsbury
Photographs by
Maayke de Ridder

Frances Lincoln, £20
ISBN 978-0711236806

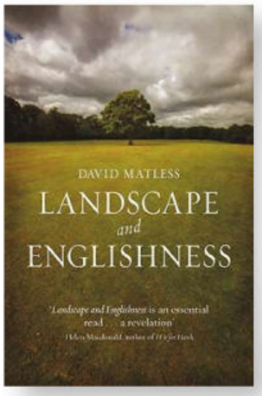
An invaluable guide to the design and planting of small gardens that includes the latest techniques and naturalistic styles.

Reviewer Stephanie Donaldson is a garden writer.

However tiny a garden may be, getting the layout and the planting right can be as tricky as it is with a far larger plot, so *New Small Garden* is an ideal handbook for anyone who would appreciate fresh ideas and practical advice. While there are already some classic books on small garden design, Noël Kingsbury has updated the subject to incorporate contemporary tastes and environmentally friendly approaches. Most of the gardens featured are in the Netherlands, a country where the gardeners are experts at making the smallest garden interesting over an extended season.

This is a book that rewards systematic reading as it leads you through the different stages of planning the garden; from assessing the space and analysing how it will be used, to style preferences, the use of scale and visual tricks that can make the garden look larger. Kingsbury recommends emulating nature by planting in layered communities as an efficient way of using plants in a small space. In other words, choosing trees, shrubs, climbers and ground cover (subshrubs, perennial and annual plants) that will coexist happily and create attractive compositions. The shaping of trees and shrubs with pollarding, coppicing, pleaching and topiary is included as an important technique to help keep everything in scale.

The case studies that are included in the book are an opportunity to see the ideas in action, while the section on rain gardens and the use of swales is particularly valuable for small urban gardens where the overuse of hard surfaces has led to problems with flooding. Maayke de Ridder's detail-rich photography is accompanied by informative captions, providing inspiring ideas for any style of small garden. A recommended read for any small garden owner.



LANDSCAPE AND ENGLISHNESS
by David Matless

Reaktion Books Press, £9.95
ISBN 978-1780235813

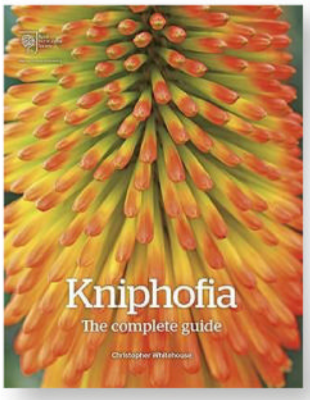
A timely account of how landscape has been central to notions of Englishness, and what that means to different people.

Reviewer Ambra Edwards is a writer and garden historian.

It is clear why it seemed timely to reissue this magisterial study, first published in 1998, and this expanded edition has a new preface considering how notions of Englishness have been threaded through cultural and political events of the intervening two decades. But this review has been so cataclysmically overtaken by events that it makes somewhat peculiar reading now.

The bulk of the book becomes all the more interesting in the light of Brexit. Landscape has been central to definitions of Englishness for centuries – a focus for debates over national identity, ideals of citizenship, the clash of history and modernity, of town and country, and visions of health and wellbeing (both physical and moral). There is something faintly unnerving about realising how recent and, in a sense, arbitrary, are so many of our prevailing notions about environment, conservation, planning and the proper function and value of the rural landscape – ideas formed largely between the 1914-18 war and the 1950s, by some fairly scary individuals. It is as if in the new social contract that emerged, geography took the place of old certainties – history, tradition, the old class structures – and offered new definitions of Englishness, but ones that were infinitely malleable, permeable to authoritarianism, even proto-fascism, to xenophobia, and to a sentimental attachment to a Little England that never was.

This is a fat (368 pages), densely written book with few (but illuminating) pictures. But Matless has a wry wit and an eye for detail that keep the pages turning – his accounts of Cockneys in the countryside (it was suggested they might wear L-plates until they learned how to behave) are deliciously funny. Thought-provoking, wide-ranging and sometimes disturbing, this book has never been more relevant.



KNIPHOFIA: THE COMPLETE GUIDE

by Christopher Whitehouse

Royal Horticultural Society, £40
ISBN 978-1907057670

The first in a series of RHS horticultural monographs – offering a comprehensive guide to the increasingly popular Kniphofia.

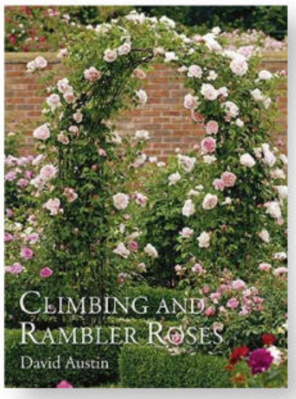
Reviewer John Hoyland is a writer and plantsman.

A book that does exactly what its title suggests: offers an impressively complete, detailed and accessible account of *Kniphofia*, once unfashionable plants that are now widely appreciated. Every one of the 70 species is comprehensively described and beautifully photographed (often, evocatively, in their native habitat). For a few rare species the holotype herbarium specimen is shown, and there are descriptions and photographs of 160 of the most significant cultivars available in Europe and North America, some introduced as recently as last year. It is this section that is probably the most interesting to general gardeners. The author, Christopher Whitehouse, goes on to list and describe 1,000 cultivar names of the genus.

Whitehouse first started work on the genus in 1997 at the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, and later at the Royal Horticultural Society where he was Keeper of the Herbarium. This is clearly the result of an enormous amount of passion and hard work. He describes the history of the genus and the development of cultivars, gives advice about cultivation and provides charts of regional origin and of bud and flower colour.

The design of the book is clear and uncluttered. It is printed on high-quality paper and the photographs reproduced with a clarity that is missing from many garden books. You get the feeling that everyone involved in making the book wanted to produce something exceptional. In all, a beautifully produced book that is well worth the £40 cover price.

The book is the first in a new series of monographs of garden plants from the RHS. If subsequent volumes are as well-produced, extensively illustrated and as thoroughly researched as this one they will provide an important resource for botanists, nurserymen and gardeners.



CLIMBING AND RAMBLER ROSES

by David Austin

Garden Art Press, £17.95
ISBN 978-1870673655

A handbook that details a stunning selection of climbing roses – and how to grow them – from one the UK's leading breeders.

Reviewer Rory Dusoir is a Kew-trained gardener and writer.

This book could be seen as a successor to Graham Stuart Thomas's *Climbing Roses Old and New* (1965). Given that perhaps the most significant development in rose breeding since then (the creation of the class of English roses) has been driven by the author of this book, he seems a natural choice to continue chronicling the genus's intricate genealogy.

Climbing and Rambler Roses begins with a brief introduction that outlines the ways in which the various types of climbing roses can best be displayed in the garden, and this is followed by descriptions of the most important climbing and rambling roses, grouped in their horticultural divisions. Each group has its own introduction explaining their breeding and general characteristics.

Although, like Thomas, Austin's career indicates a strong predilection for the 'old' rose style, his knowledge – as we would expect of such a distinguished breeder – is broad and his tastes catholic. Indeed, he exhorts those readers who might be prejudiced against modern roses to look afresh at Climbing Hybrid Teas, for example. The approach of the book is refreshingly balanced and detached considering how much the author has invested in his own breeding line.

Given the richness of the subject matter and the stature of its author, I do feel that this book deserved a more generous format. Although there are enough photographic illustrations to whet the appetite, they could have been larger and more numerous – only a selection of cultivars have been illustrated. And certainly one does not feel that Austin's store of knowledge has been exploited as fully as it might had the text been longer, which feels like something of a missed opportunity. But these are just minor, quibbles in what is an extremely worthwhile book.

Book reviews

RAISED BED REVOLUTION
BUILD IT, FILL IT, PLANT IT ... Garden Anywhere!
TARA NOLAN

RAISED BED REVOLUTION
by Tara Nolan

Cool Springs Press, £20
ISBN 978-1591866503

An imaginative and informative guide to the versatility of raised beds that leaves no stone unturned and has wide appeal.

Reviewer Tamsin Westhorpe is a writer, lecturer and gardener.

Choosing this book will certainly make you think outside of the box. Who would have thought it possible to write 272 pages on the subject of raised beds? After all, aren't they just a box full of soil to grow plants in?

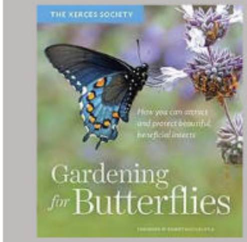
On reading the first few pages I soon realised that new author Tara has certainly turned this box on its head. She has obviously lived and breathed the subject and must now be a world authority. She makes the reader realise just how important and inclusive this style of gardening is. The raised bed has been at the heart of many school, community and charity gardens so the word 'revolution' used in the title is justified. The book is quick to point out that these beds allow gardeners with poor soil and paved surfaces to enjoy healthy crops. They are, in short, responsible for putting so many people in touch with a fantastic hobby and allow thousands of people to garden in impossible spaces.

Initially, I assumed the book was for beginners but, on deeper inspection, I consider it to have wider appeal. More accomplished gardeners facing a challenge, such as a roof garden or a slope, will not be disappointed. No stone's been left unturned and topics covered include calculating the amount of soil required, soil types, ingenious design ideas, how to build and choice of materials. The book is clearly illustrated with colour photography and I was impressed with the gallery in chapter one. Never before have I seen a henhouse with a raised bed for a roof.

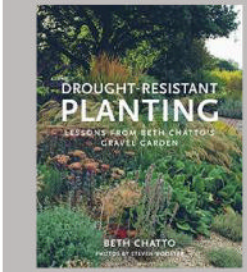
Don't let the fact that this book was published in the USA put you off. It's definitely raised my ambitions for this type of gardening and it's perfect for anyone involved with a community project. Long live the revolution.

Other books

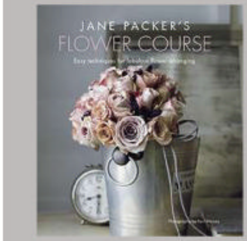
Five new titles that provide a detailed insight into the flora and fauna of the garden and how to preserve their existence.



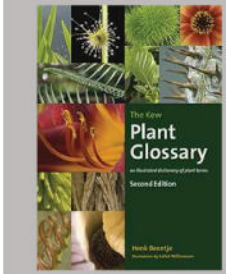
GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES
by The Xerces Society
Timber Press, £17.99
ISBN 978-1604695984
An introduction to some of the most endangered butterflies and a guide to creating a garden that can protect and nurture them.


DROUGHT-RESISTANT PLANTING
LESSONS FROM BETH CHATTO'S GRAVEL GARDEN
BETH CHATTO

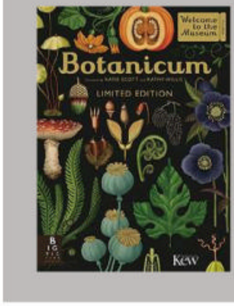
DROUGHT-RESISTANT PLANTING
by Beth Chatto
Photographs by Steven Wooster
Frances Lincoln, £16.99
ISBN 978-0711238114
A new edition of *Beth Chatto's Gravel Garden* with an update on how the garden has progressed.



JANE PACKER'S FLOWER COURSE
by Jane Packer
Photographs by Paul Massey
Ryland Peters & Small, £16.99
ISBN 978-1849757584
Tips and techniques for creating beautiful arrangements from one of the UK's leading event florists.

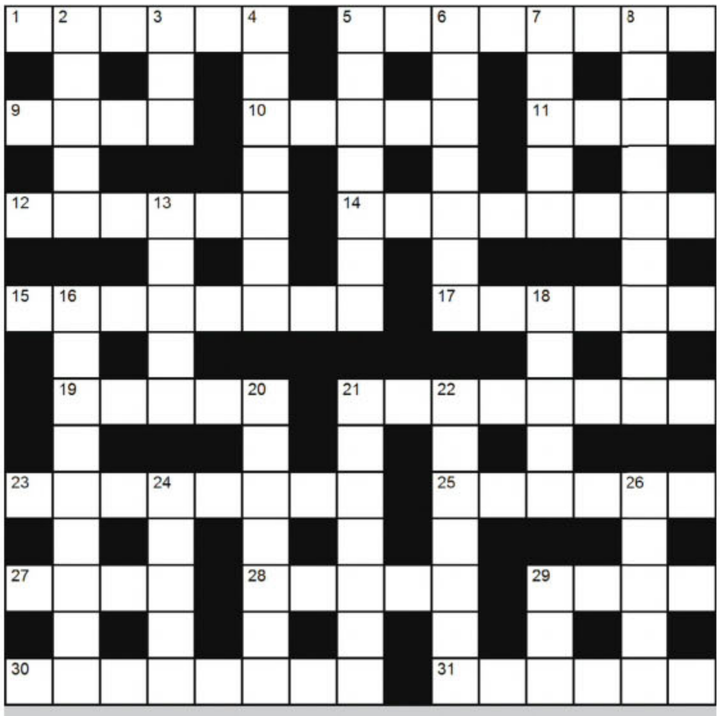


THE KEW PLANT GLOSSARY SECOND EDITION
by Henk Beentje
Illustrations by Juliet Williamson
Kew Publishing, £18
ISBN 978-1842466049
An updated, illustrated dictionary of 4,905 descriptive plant terms.



BOTANICUM
by Kathy Willis
Illustrations by Katie Scott
Big Pictures Press, £20
ISBN 978-1783707256
A beautiful book full of detailed, informative botanical illustrations of hundreds of plants and flowers.

Crossword



ACROSS

1 Genus of daisy-like flowers that's universal? (6)
5 Trifoliate plant, 'lesser clover', 'false boulder' (8)
9 Initially cultivates lilies on damp lump of earth (4)
10 Flower … when tops of short stems removed from blossom (5)
11 Underground bud eg of amaryllis – it lights up (4)
12 Greek sun-god's leek with blue-green leaves (6)
14 Name of a red-flowering cactus dahlia: 'Daisy rod', perhaps (5,3)
15 Genus of plants in mallow family – until boa moved (8)
17 Like the roots of orchids and climbing vines (6)
19 Harmful as hemlock, awfully exotic (but not English) (5)
21 *Laurus nobilis* – beats yew, anyhow! (5,3)
23 A NZ cousin of the aster spoils a lime (sic) (8)
25 Intertwine hedge branches, putting length in soft stone fruit (6)
27 Sign of damage left by leaf-fall (4)
28 Umbellifer with liquorice-flavoured seeds – partially disorganised (5)
29 Detect a sign of leaf rust? (4)
30 Annual October celebration of the likes of Lord Lambourne and Lord Derby? (5,3)
31 Insectivorous plant, genus *Drosera* (6)

DOWN

2 Woodland primula, aka great cowslip (5)
3 Part of sedum overturned reveals wet, soft earth (3)
4 Lacking in humus and organic matter, it's not much use for cultivating crops (7)
5 A strain of hellebore – it's the top spot in Wales! (7)
6 The thrift genus, held by farmer I admire (7)
7 Raspberry genus – from Rugby Union transport! (5)
8 Former hybrid orchid eg 'Wildcat' (now classed as *Oncostele*), or almanac, possibly (9)
13 Milky fluid from eg poinsettia (not on time, unknown quantity) (5)
16 Invasive plant of *Ranunculus* genus, put tuber roughly around top of container (9)
18 Nutty-flavoured maincrop potato, needs some winter attention (5)
20 Cultivar of *Malus domestica* – front part is a crisp lettuce (7)
21 Use frightening tactics to rake out dead moss etc? (7)
22 State explicitly it's a fast-growing broad bean (7)
24 Edible mushroom's greater length? (5)
26 Sylvia, 20th-century landscape artist/garden designer boast English (5)
29 Major energy source – in flowers, unsurprisingly (3)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

SEPTEMBER'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 8 Lithodora **9** Loamy **10** Camelot **11** Knautia **12** Crabs **14/21** Air pot **15** Tarka **16** Picotee **18/17** Peeping Tom **20** Cream **22** Combe **23** Prickle **25** Needled **27** Relay **28** Leaf miner.

DOWN 1 Atom **3** Bootlace **4** Canker **5** Olea **6** Nasturtium **7** Cynara **8** Lacecap **13/2** Alchemilla mollis **15** Toe **18** Petunias **19** Guelder **20** Capers **21** Pueblo **22** Cleome **24** Keys **26** Ling.

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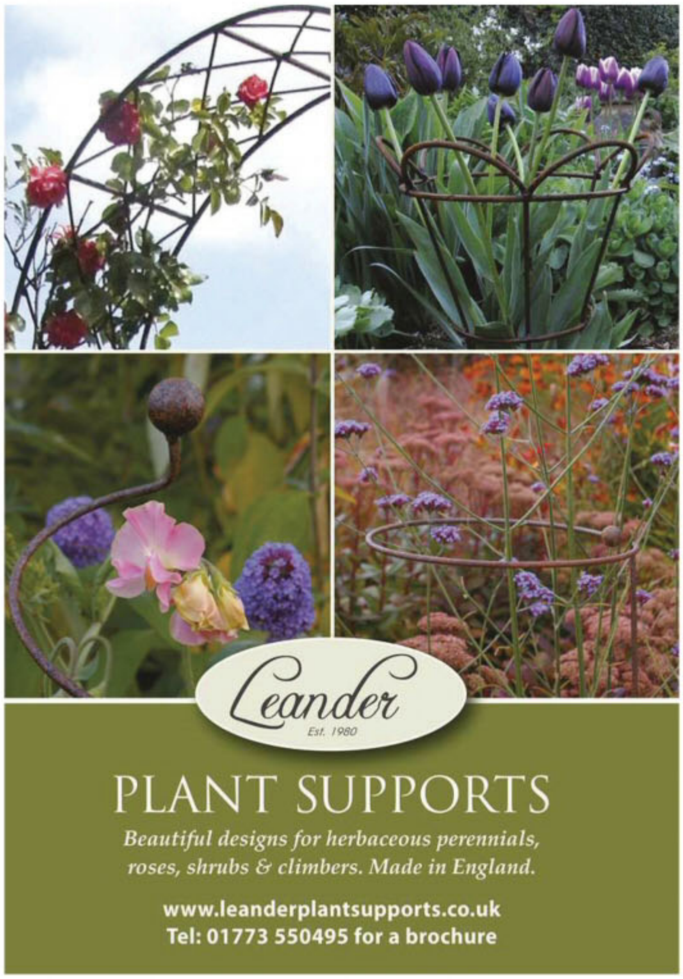
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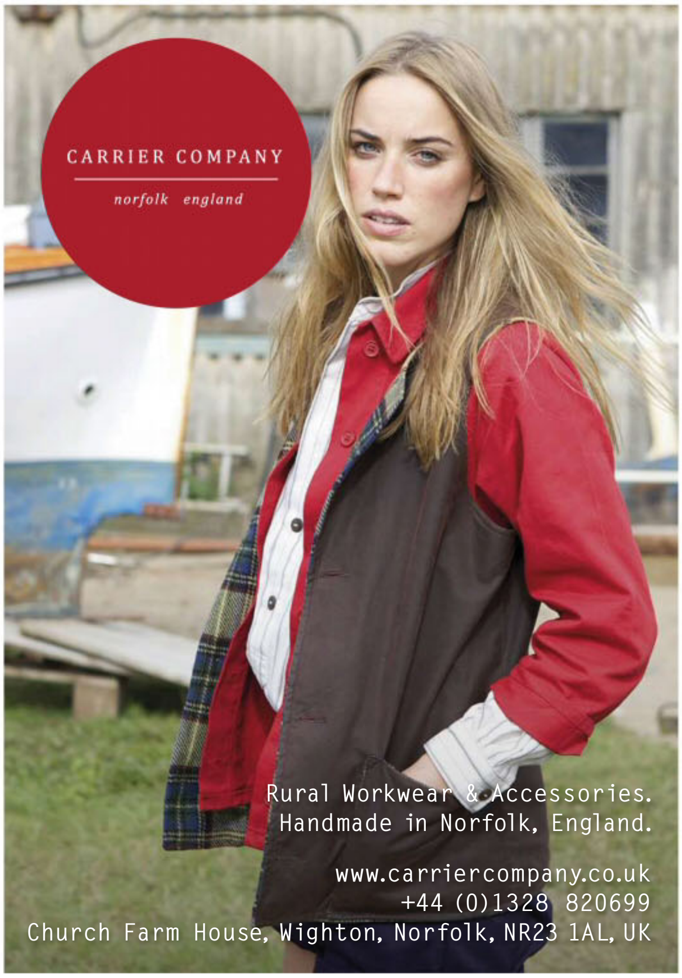
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Garden Planner

AUTUMN

As autumn days shorten, it's tempting to retreat indoors, yet there are still plenty of important practical tasks you can do to get head.

It's the perfect time to start planting spring bulb displays, as well as roses and many varieties of trees and shrubs. Have a good tidy up, both in the garden and the greenhouse, and remember to protect plants and pots before the first frosts nip. So, take advantage of bright October days and enjoy your garden to the full.

Extend your growing season

ALITEX

Autumn is often seen as the time to take stock, order seeds, preserve the autumn bounty and hunker down for the winter ahead but if you've always dreamed of having a greenhouse, and are looking to be growing in it during spring next year, then now is the time to get in touch.

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Three distinguished choirs are joining forces with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to bring the audience an awe-inspiring level of power and emotion in a performance of **Verdi's Requiem** at the Royal Albert Hall on **Saturday 24 September** at 7.30pm. Listen to the monumental harmony of the London Philharmonic Choir, Huddersfield Choral Society and the Royal Choral Society along with internationally renowned conductor Brian Wright. These performers will combine with four incredibly accomplished soloists: soprano Katherine Broderick, mezzo-soprano Susan Bickley, tenor Peter Auty and bass Graeme Broadbent.

This will be followed by **Beethoven's Ninth**, which will be performed at the Royal Albert Hall on **Sunday 9 October** at 3pm. Celebrated pianist Danny Driver will open the concert with the most spectacular of Beethoven's concertos, the Piano Concerto No. 5 *Emperor*. This appropriately named, heroic piece never fails to excite, and has proven to be a firm favourite for audiences around the world.

Crowning the evening is the piece that many people believe to be Beethoven's greatest work, the Symphony No. 9 *Choral*. With acclaimed soloists Elizabeth Watts, Heather Shipp, Gwyn Hughes Jones and David Soar joining the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Choir, it continues to enchant and amaze, culminating with the famous 'Ode to Joy'.

The autumn season of choral masterpieces concludes with ***Carmina Burana*** at the Royal Albert Hall on **Saturday 29 October** at 7.30pm. This impressive performance of Carl Orff's 1930s work returns to the Royal Albert Hall for the tenth time and has been seen by more than 40,000 people. Book now for a majestic choral concert.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

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Since 2010, British company CPR Call Blocker has been developing cutting-edge solutions to the nuisance call nightmare. Call Blocker is a simple device which plugs into your landline phone that blocks unwanted calls. When a call comes in simply press the big red 'Block Now' button which blasts the call away and sends their number to a block list. They can no longer call you again.

The company is now offering an exclusive deal to Gardens Illustrated readers of 20% off their latest call blocker the V5000. The V5000 is pre-loaded with 5,000 of the worst offending nuisance call numbers targeting Britons every day.

In other words, the user should see a reduction in their nuisance calls as soon as the device is plugged in. The V5000 also has the ability to block a further 1,500 nuisance numbers at the touch of a button. Plus, you can block withheld numbers, area codes and even entire countries.

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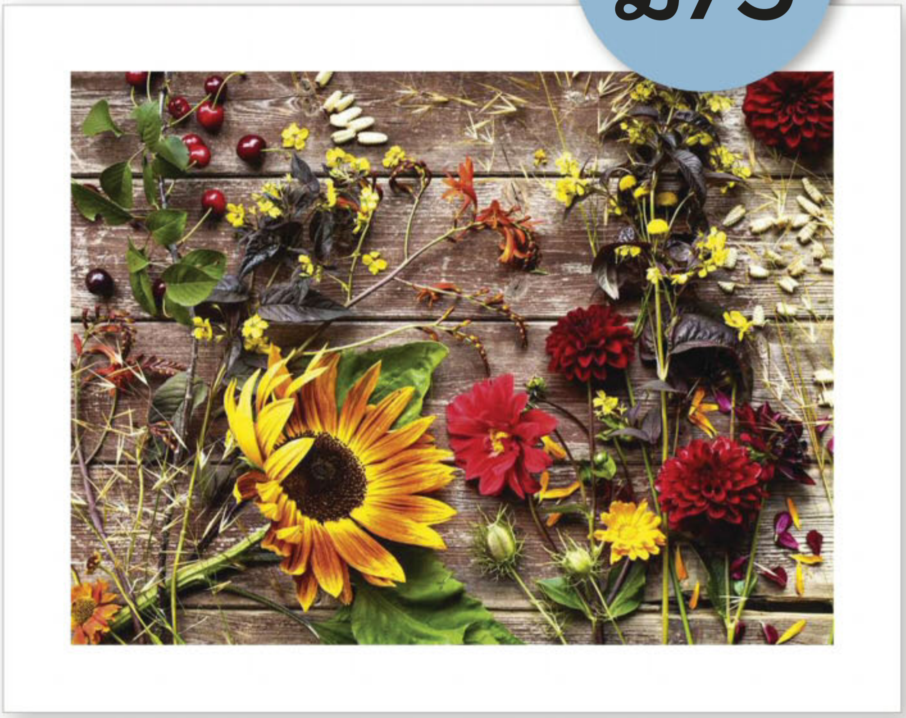
We are delighted to offer readers the chance to buy of these gorgeous prints of photographs by Andrew Montgomery. The images of flower arrangements, created by Anne Townley of Ascott Gardens (ascottgardens.co.uk), originally featured in an article on cut flowers in our plant special issue [issue 229, page 52] and we thought they were so lovely that we wanted to frame them.

Available in two sizes – small (363 x 297mm) and large (533 x 420mm) – and limited to a run of 50 prints per image in each size, the photographs are reproduced as archival quality giclée prints on Hahnemühle Photo Rag 310gsm paper, which gives a warm, textured matte finish. Small prints cost £75 and large prints, £105, plus a P&P charge of £6.65 per order. Please allow 15 days for delivery. We're sorry there is no subscriber discount on these prints.



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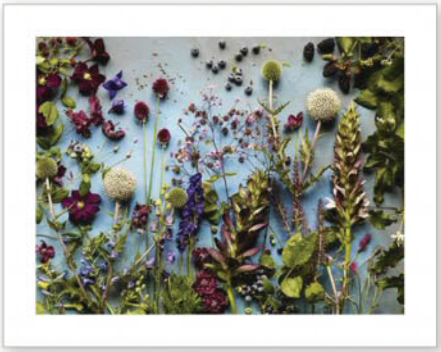

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Autumn in colour

Enjoy a garden visit this month and immerse yourself in the blaze of colour that autumn brings to borders and trees.

1 COTSWOLD WILDLIFE PARK & GARDENS

Take a walk on the wild side – stroll peacefully around the park in September and October and enjoy the gardens at their late summer peak, with tropical planting, cascading planters and beautiful borders. The stunning gardens and themed borders make a beautiful backdrop to the animals. With over 260 different animal species in over 120 acres of mature parkland, there's plenty of space to relax and get closer to wildlife. RHS Partner Garden in 2016.

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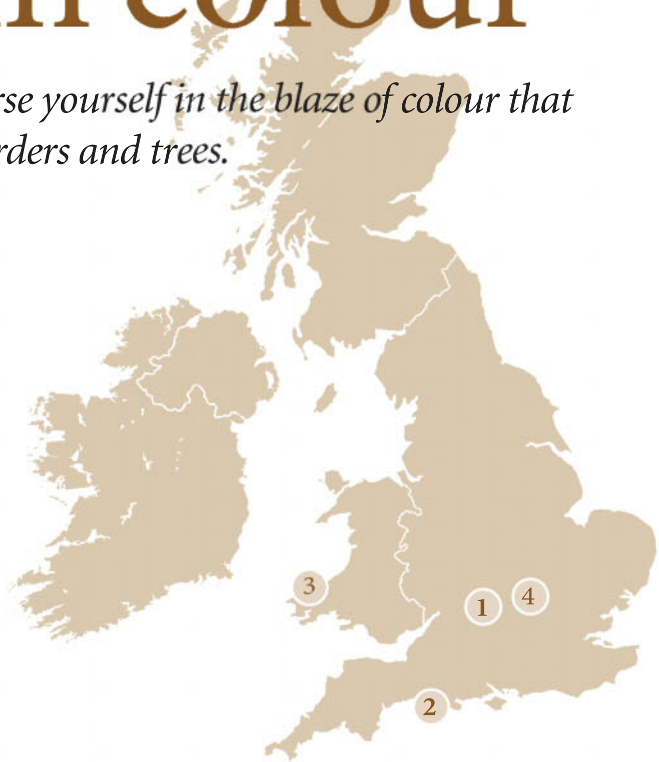

2 ABBOTSBURY SUBTROPICAL GARDENS

This award-winning garden is dramatically illuminated and pathways are magically lit with candle light every evening from 13-30 October. Enjoy the autumn colours in daylight, retire to the restaurant then take the same route illuminated and candle lit after refreshments. The gardens open at 10am and close at 8.30pm during the event. Lights go on at dusk.

Address **Bullers Way,**
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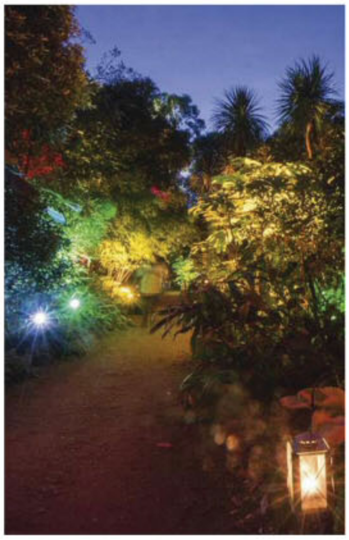

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3 DYFFRYN FERNANT GARDEN

Six acres in West Wales created from wilderness over 20 years. Grounded in its sense of place between the Preseli Hills and the Irish Sea. Exotic, exuberant planting and ornamental grasses give way to wild marsh, water and woodland. "*Go and see it*" – Monty Don. Open daily, 12-6pm April-October.

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4 WATERPERRY GARDENS

Celebrate Apple Weekend at Waterperry – 7- 9 October. Apple and juice tastings, identification, expert advice and information about growing fruit trees, orchard tours and more. Waterperry Gardens – a place to explore, relax and shop in beautiful surroundings all year round. Opening times: 10am-5.30pm.

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Reader offers

Save 20% on spring-flowering bulbs from Avon Bulbs

This issue we asked a selection of leading garden designers to choose their favourite spring-flowering bulbs for our feature on page 40. Drawing on these choices, specialist grower Avon Bulbs has put together a selection of bulbs at a 20% discount. Place an order now.

***Allium* 'Mount Everest' x 3**

~~£7~~ **Offer price £5.60**

Strong, straight, glossy green stems and leaves that persist until nearly flowering time in late May or June. The head is a ball of white flowers 10-12.5cm across, which is particularly good when used with other strong colours, such as *Gladiolus byzantinus*, or against a dark hedge. Flowers May – June. 90cm.

***Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* x 5**

~~£5.30~~ **Offer price £4.24**

A feature plant for the border where they make a magnificent show with many erect stems of deep lavender-blue flowers, curving skyward from thick clumps when established. Plant in some shade for longer lasting blooms and they love heavier soils that hold the moisture. Flowers April – May. 80cm.

***Camassia* 'Blue Heaven' x 5**

~~£10~~ **Offer price £8**

A paler blue than most other *Camassia* and of middling height. This is the result of a crossing of *C. cusickii* and *C. leichtlinii*, and a considerable improvement on the standard pale-blue *C. cusickii*. Best in moist, fertile soil and naturalises well when happy. Flowers April – May. 45cm.

***Leucojum aestivum* 'Gravetye Giant' x 3**

~~£4~~ **Offer price £3.20**

Also known as the Loddon lily or snowflake, it has clusters of up to eight, large white bells, emerald-tipped, hanging from bare stems above the glossy green daffodil-like foliage. Lightly scented and clump forming. Best in moist soil in sun or part shade. Allow to self seed naturally. Flowers April. 45cm. AGM*.

***Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus* x 5**

~~£3.80~~ **Offer price £3.04**

The pheasant's eye daffodil likes the cooler conditions provided by dappled shade or in borders where the leaves of other plants provide ground-level shade. The flower is mainly white and slightly swept back with a central, small, pale-gold cup edged with red. It has a sweet but spicy scent. Flowers May. 35cm. AGM.

***Narcissus* 'Segovia' x 5**

~~£3.20~~ **Offer price £2.56**

'Segovia' belongs to the Jonquilla group of narcissus and has a flattened, pale-lemon trumpet, which sits squarely against the bright-white petals while the leaves are narrow. Prefers a spot in full sun. Highly scented and well suited to growing in a pot where it can be best admired. Flowers April. 15cm. AGM.

JASON INGRAM

***Nectaroscordum siculum* x 5**

~~£3.20~~ **Offer price £2.56**

The sturdy stems carry clusters of 10 to 30 thimble-sized, waxy, bell-shaped flowers branching out from a central point. They are cream with burgundy-pink markings, flushed green at the base. It grows easily in well-drained soil, and will tolerate part shade. Striking seedheads too. Flowers early summer. 75cm.

SHARON PEARSON

***Tulipa* 'Ballerina' x 10**

~~£5.50~~ **Offer price £4.40**

The vibrant and glowing soft tangerine-orange flower is an absolutely brilliant colour when handled well and with a most welcome heady scent when warmed in the sun. The second-year blooms show some more twist to the petals and may well be more yellow and less orange. Flowers April – May. 50cm. AGM.

***Tulipa* 'Burgundy' x 10**

~~£7~~ **Offer price £5.60**

Elegantly poised in a purplish hue of deep lilac, this cultivar of lily-flowered tulip has flowers with a waisted shape and more pointed petals than some in the group. A sturdy stem makes this a good choice for cut flowers. Plant in a sunny, sheltered position in well-drained soil. Flowers April – May. 45cm.

---

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Crocus tommasinianus **x 10**
~~£3.60~~ **Offer price £2.88**
The flowers vary from pale, silvery lilac to lavender pink, with a long, white throat and narrow, dark-green leaves always fully developed when it flowers. The sturdy stems hold the flower heads up above their leaves. Is attractive to early emerging insects. Flowers February – March. 10cm. AGM.

Hyacinthoides non-scripta **x 10**
~~£4.50~~ **Offer price £3.60**
This is the English bluebell, which glistens in damp glades and woods. It has narrow, tubular flowers in violet-blue, crowded to one side of the stem, and strap-like leaves. They are better in some shade and will naturalise under deciduous trees. Plant in naturalistic drifts. Flowers April – May. 30cm.

Narcissus **'Thalia' x 5**
~~£2.50~~ **Offer price £2**
One of the few daffodils that open out pure white, 'Thalia' is refined and elegant, multi-headed with slightly recurved outer petals. A well-known, classy favourite since 1916, it is once again favoured for its simplicity and because it makes a very good cut flower. Scented. Flowers March – April. 35cm.

Tulipa **'Havran' x 10**
~~£5.25~~ **Offer price £4.20**
A luscious cultivar with dark stems leading to deep, plum-purple flowers with a grape-like bloom and silvery-blue foliage. It can sometimes be multi-flowered. This is a good garden form of Triumph tulip, providing that elusive darkness of colour in late April. Flowers April. 45cm.

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All orders will be confirmed and dispatched from October onwards. Please note that your contract for the supply of goods is with Avon Bulbs. Full terms and conditions available upon request. All offers are subject to availability and Avon Bulbs reserves the right to substitute any varieties for others of equal or greater value.

SHARON PEARSON

Tulipa **'Red Shine' x 10**
~~£5.50~~ **Offer price £4.40**
The glistening deep red, almost opalescent petals put one in mind of a ruby Tiffany lamp. This lily-flowered cultivar has a tall elegance but is not one for the faint-hearted. Combines well with *Tulipa* 'Spring Green' or *Tulipa* 'White Triumphator'. Flowers April – May. 45cm. AGM.

Tulipa sylvestris **x 5**
~~£3~~ **Offer price £2.40**
Easy to grow and one that will tolerate some shade, growing happily in grass and producing fragrant, dainty, yellow flowers intermittently as seems to be their nature. One of the best for naturalising, it spreads by underground stolon or seed. Flowers April. 30cm.

SHARON PEARSON

Tulipa turkestanica **x 10**
~~£2.50~~ **Offer price £2**
Ivory and cream, star-shaped flowers – sometimes up to 12 on a stem – with dark anthers contrasting to the petals, greenish on their backs. The leaves are a greyish-green. They need bright conditions, out of too much wind and are well suited to the front of borders, rockeries or pots. Flowers April. 20cm. AGM.

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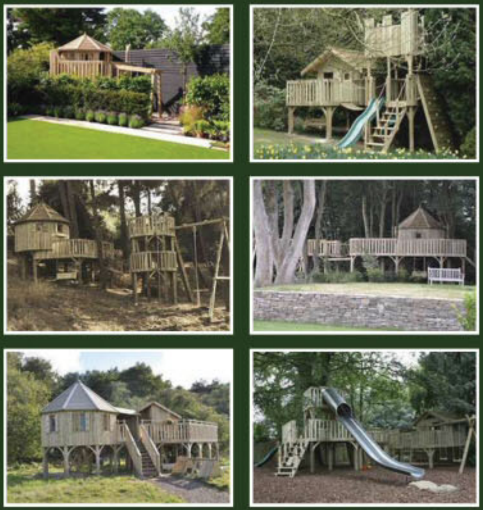

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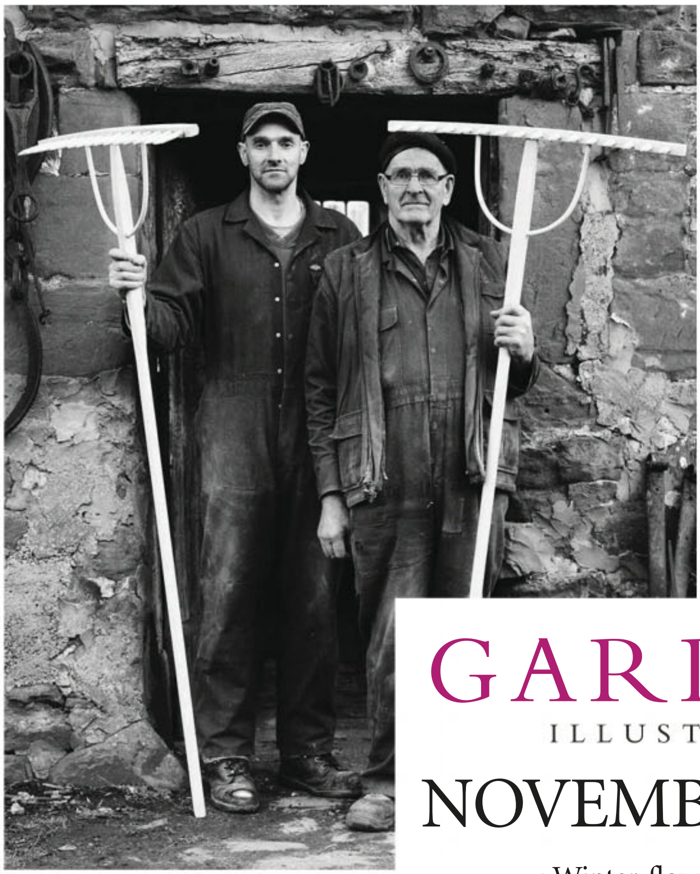

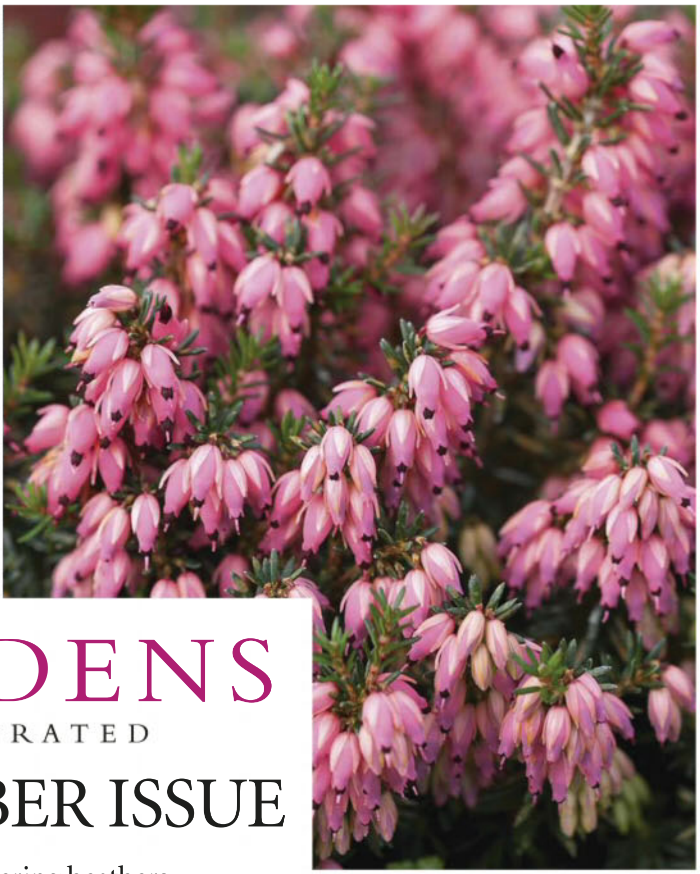

GARDENS
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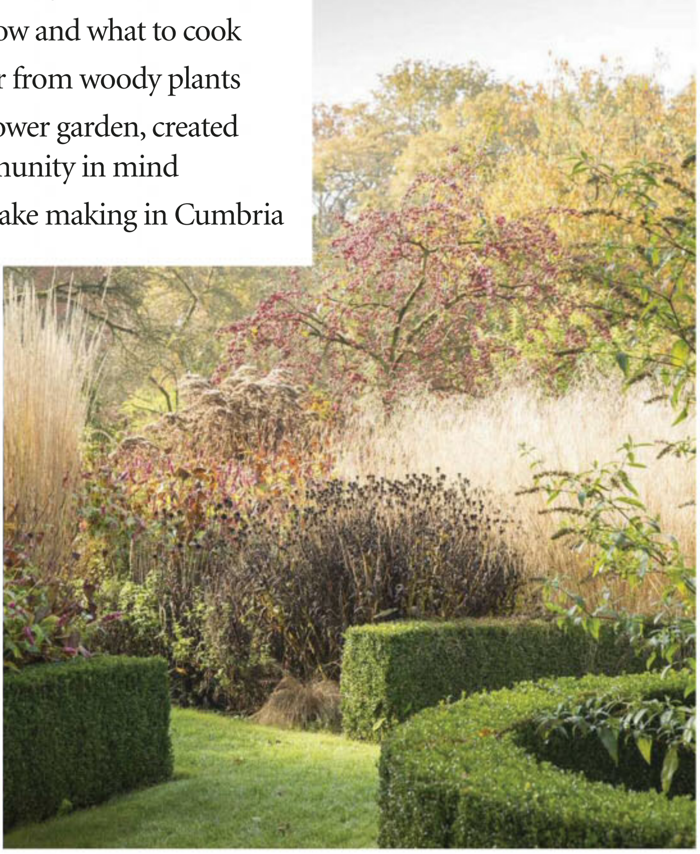
NOVEMBER ISSUE

- Winter-flowering heathers
- Garlic – how to grow and what to cook
- Late-season colour from woody plants
- A Dutch walled flower garden, created with the community in mind
- Traditional wooden rake making in Cumbria



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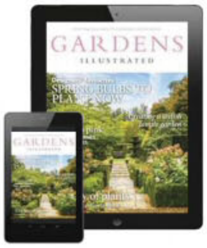

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The frost report

Frank finds listening to weather forecasts poor compensation for not being in the UK

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **CELIA HART**

It's bad enough going home to a house without a cat or a dog; a garden without a dahlia or an aeonium would be almost as lifeless

The great gamble this month is that relatively benign weather will continue until the end. If things go gently the borders might be looking better than they have all summer and it is easy to forget what is round the corner, just as it is difficult to guess when the corner will come. You want to be ahead of the weather always, but it is a hard decision if making it brings the year to an end. When October cuts up rough, on the other hand, there is nothing to be lost by clearing away the shattered fragments of summer and putting the tender elements in the safest keeping at your disposal, even if it leaves you with nothing to look at but the narrowing darkness.

The great October gamble is not mine to play these days or, at least, I have no choice in the matter, as I would have to be in England to lay odds either way. Trips home, naturally, are concentrated on the spring and summer months, with a good chunk of midwinter to cover Christmas, but not beginning until the end of November. So, at the beginning of September, far too early to wrap anything or drag it inside for forced hibernation, the tender stuff can only be wished good luck as I head for the airport. The only precaution I take is that the sprinkler which waters the pots is turned off and drained down; a dry spell being unlikelier still than a freeze.

And luckily, being on top of the hill, we don't get those early frosts that plague the valley dwellers, so there's a fair chance that late November will be soon enough to rescue the darlings, and some probability that the canna leaves will yet be unblackened. A deep run of cold, on the other hand, would see the lot off: all the bedraggled and neglected remnants of my tendernesses, none of which, these days, have even the protection of being in the ground. And the beautiful pink pots they stand in will shatter into concentric rings.

Two years running I was caught out even though technically in residence. The first time I was there and did what I could; digging and dragging and wrapping into the biting dusk. The second year I had gone away for a few days and came back to find my tropical collection suddenly and devastatingly manageable. It had begun to build again before the Californian removal, and I gave a lot of it to friends for safe keeping for the duration. But still there is an arc of pots around a sprinkler on the terrace, because it's bad enough going home to a house without a cat or a dog in it; a garden without a dahlia or an aeonium would be almost as lifeless.

Now I listen to the BBC forecast with as much attention as I probably should have when I was there to do something about it. Perhaps it is easier to believe when, two days out of three, I don't have to witness the opposite of what was predicted. They tend towards the dramatic though, even when they are being half-right, and both Christmases so far I've returned expecting carnage only to find an unruffled scene on the terrace.

Perhaps this year will catch me out. It is almost certain to, by the law of hubris, now that I've written on the subject. But plants are not irreplaceable (or those that are are in safer hands). The pots are kind of irreplaceable, the man who made them having stopped, but that is not the most annoying thing either. The irritation is in not being there to play the game and take responsibility for the gamble; in being here under an unvarying sky and not there to watch the sky change and guess what it means, and to gossip disparagingly with friends and neighbours about the forecast and watch one season crumble to another and be ready to catch the fall. ☐

Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

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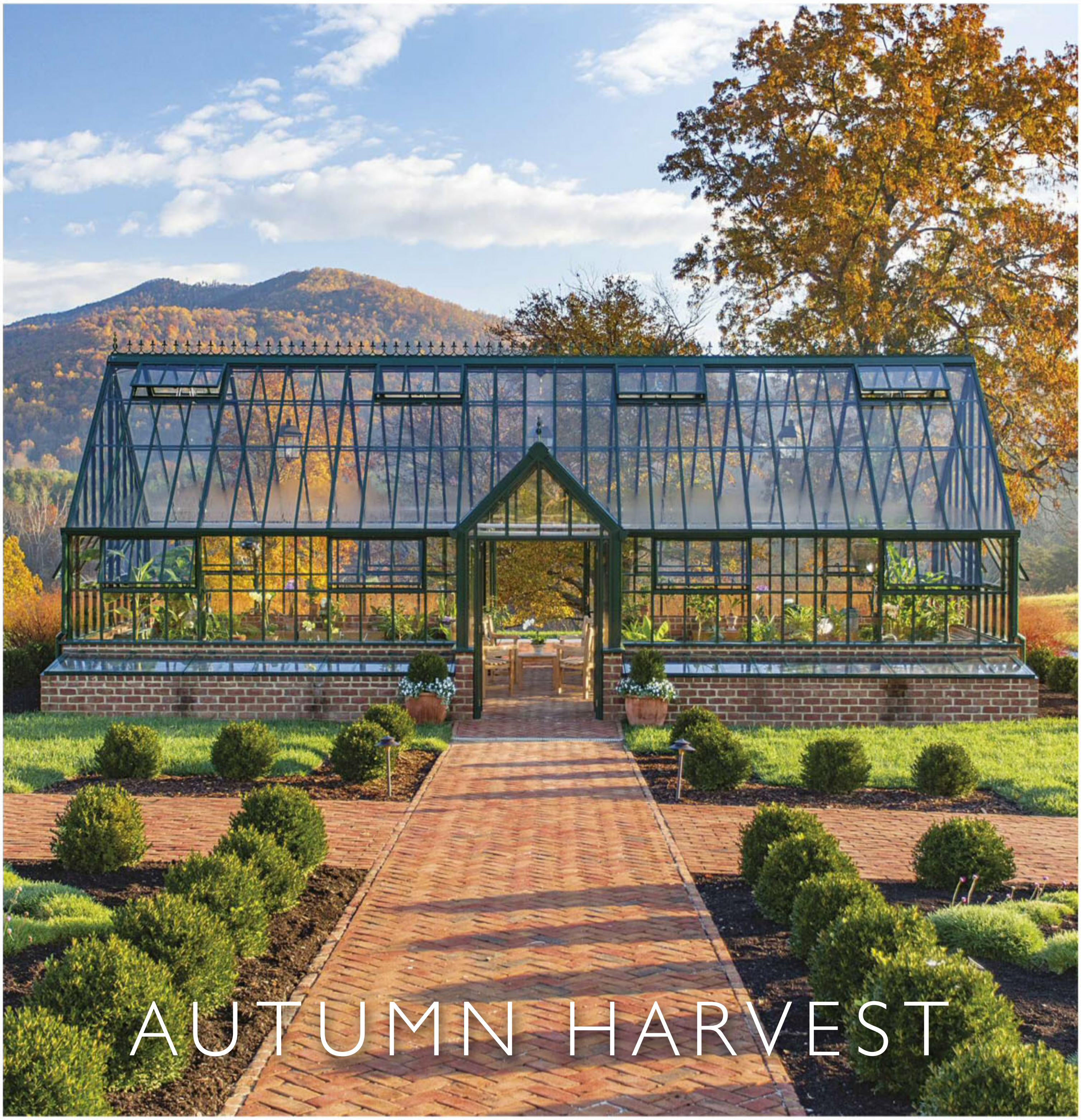

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